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A Case for Inclusion: A study of the Relationship between students of Color in Private Progressive Institution

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By
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For the little black and brown kids in the classroom wondering why the teacher won't call on them.

Your breath is valid, your ideas are valid, and your voice is *one thousand* times stronger than any other in the room.

You are *more* than enough.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
Allah! There is no God but He,
the Living, the Self-subsisting, the Eternal.
No slumber can seize Him, nor sleep.
All things in heaven and earth are His.
Who could intercede in His presence without His permission?
He knows what appears in front of and behind His creatures.
Nor can they encompass any knowledge of Him except what he wills.
His throne extends over the heavens and the earth,
and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them,
for He is the Highest and Most Exalted.

-Surah 2:255, Ayat Al-Kursi (The Throne Verse)

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To my Grandparents, Thelma, Willie and Carrie. I think about you every day and I feel you with me. Thank you for your guidance and love.

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Abstract:

This thesis critically examines the processes of socialization and identity construction encountered by young students of color from progressive predominately white high schools and how it directly and indirectly impacts their understandings of self. By first outlining the important theories, and frameworks from the early progressive education movement, and history of early schooling all the way to contemporary education theory, I analyze the personal experiences of recent graduates of color from The New York Progressive School (NYPS) in the last 5-7 years. My project also incorporates a historical aspect in which I will research the rise of Progressive Education, the founding of The New York Progressive School and its development into an independent institution that champions the progressive education model. Through looking at minority experiences, this project explores what "Progressive Education" means for different people in this institution. I am using the term "Progressive Education to embody the education model where schools and teachers aim to educate the multiple spheres in a child's life, while also engaging with their personal interests. As a sociologist, this project will intervene on theoretical questions concerning the sociology of race, and education, and the role of educational institutions in our society. As a human rights scholar, this projects addresses the contradictions in progressive educational institutions regarding the minority communities that exist in them and their ability to practice agency in these environments. For my project the main texts I will be drawing upon are the works of Khan (2011), Meyer (1977), Bowers (1967), and Tatum (2003).

Key Words: Progressive Education, Race, Agency, Independent Schools.

Table of Contents:

Preface

"I do not always feel colored" [However] "I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background" -Zora Neale Hurston

One of the hardest things amongst going to college, is the adjustment to going to a new school. Growing up, I was super fortunate enough to go to an independent school with the same people from pre-kindergarten to senior year. But for about 10 of my 14 years at this school, I was the only black girl. Being outside the majority in this environment was the only thing that I had come to know as a student. Once I came to Bard, I was completely unaware of how to make friends, how to create new connections with teachers, and how to operate in a completely new environment in upstate New York. In this process of re-socialization, I realized how unique my experiences with schooling was, as alumni of a predominantly white, private school in New York City. I saw all types of differences and inequalities amongst myself and my peers, ranging from race, socioeconomic class to academic achievement and support. These differences as a result had a huge effect on my identity formation, my relations to my white peers, and my teachers. I felt a particular amount of pressure on myself as a black student, to not only try twice as hard to be just as good as my white counterparts, but also in that process to be silent and less visible. It was difficult to develop a voice when you were drowning in the majority. It was through this realization that made me eager to find the voices of other like mine and amplify them. I found that the experience as a young black child growing up and navigating their way through an environment and a culture that is quite clearly not one's own, has undoubtedly played a large role in shaping their identities.

Upon reflecting on my own experiences, I found myself interested in the racial relations, the connections between students and teachers, and the social dynamics in the larger context of a

private, predominantly white, elite high school. These themes would play out through their subjective experiences in school. What Khan describes as a "hidden curriculum" in his book, Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School, is the discovery of an underlying structure at work, that may differ from the ideals and frameworks of the school that are publicized. Similar to Khan, I sought out to discover the hidden curriculum at work in New York Progressive School, and see how this curriculum have affected students of color and their schooling experiences. One of the things pushing me were finding out the specific issues that were concerning them most as students and how the school could possibly better accommodate them.

Apart of what makes the studies of private schools unique are their size: both in the school and classroom itself, their educational philosophy that distinctly differentiates itself from that of public schooling, and their ability to deliberately select its students and organize a community. The rigorous application process that these schools go through to recruit students from kindergarten age all the way through middle school and socially engineer them in one singular space is unlike any other school. The special appeal of The New York Progressive School is that champions itself on being one of the first schools in New York City to have adopted the progressive education model. This means that when they teach, they cater to all parts of the child, physical, emotional, academic. They are there to support and build the child in all of these spheres of life with hopes of them becoming active in their community. I made the decision to focus my study on recent high school graduates because it is at this time where most begin to reflect the most on their previous forms of schooling. Moving on from high school is an important transitional phase. Whether in college or somewhere else, people tend to draw on the lessons and experiences as they move on to something else. I focus particularly on the students

of color in this community, because I feel that their voices have been silenced in studies of private schooling and progressive education. In conclusion, this study examines the socialization processes encountered by young students of color from private white high schools directly and indirectly impacts their understandings of self.

Research Methods:

In order to better understand these students' experiences of independent school and educational inclusivity, I decided to connect with and interview students who had graduated NYPS from 1-5 years ago. I posted a flyer of interest on Facebook in our respective alumni groups, and they all reached out to me. We had our interviews either in person or over the phone. For around two months, I spent my time with 13 graduates who identified themselves of color. More Specifically, I interviewed seven black students, 3 Latino students, one Afro-Latino identifying student, and 2 biracial students who have Partial black identities. Of the 13 participants, 5 identified as working class, while the rest identified as middle class. Because of the location of the school, most of the participants were from the New York City Metropolitan area.

NAME	LIFER/ NEWCOMER	HEADSTART PROGRAM?	RACE	PRONOUNS
Aaliyah	Newcomer	Prep for Prep	Afro-Latino	She,Her, Hers
Marcus	Lifer	N/A	Black	He, Him, His
David	Newcomer	None	Latino	He, Him, His
Jesus	Newcomer	Prep for Prep	Latino	He, Him, His
Nina	Newcomer	Oliver Scholars Program	Black	She, Her, Hers
Brianna	Newcomer	Prep for Prep	Afro-Latino	She, Her, Hers
Arielle	Lifer	N/A	Biracial (Black, White)	She, Her, Hers
Danielle	Lifer	N/A	Latino	She, Her, Hers
Cassius	Lifer	N/A	Black	He, Him, His
Gabrielle	Newcomer	HEAF	Latino	She, Her, Hers
Sage	Newcomer	None	Black	They,Them, Theirs
Riley	Newcomer	None	Biracial (Black, Asian)	She, Her, Hers
Sonia	Lifer	N/A	Black	She, Her, Hers

For my institutional Review Board process, I found myself looking for this special population simply because they could remember their experiences in high school well. I sought out participants through posting on social networking sites. The Independent school community is a very tight knit group, both students, parents and alumni alike, and within that group there is an even tighter network of the alums, parents, and students of color. So as a member of that network I used my connections to lead me to potential participants. I initially planned to aim for the most recent graduates from the last 5-7 years, however because of interest and proximity to being in the school I found myself talking to recent graduates as well. I then went forward to do a one on one interview where participants were asked a series of questions centered on their personal life, identity and its effects on school, teachers, peers and also how these encounters made them see themselves as students of color. I made the decision to only interview those who have left the institution. This provides an additional perspective on how life is post-grad, and gave the respondents the chance to look on their experience somewhat objectively. It also reflects on how graduating and the transition from high school to college, or work or whatever else varies across different racial and class backgrounds. Because they all came from the same high school, there did lack some variation in my study. However, I found that their experience can mirror those who may come from similar educational backgrounds, as well as model examples of inclusion for schools who have similar ideologies, and seek to do better.

My interview questions (See Appendix A) were primarily the same for each participant. Because I found that student experiences differ greatly depending on if you entered in the school at a younger age, or if you integrated in at a later age; I have two separate sets of questions depending on the grade and age of the participant when they entered the school. I have one set of questions for the “lifers” or the alumni who entered in Pre-Kindergarten, or Kindergarten (such

as myself), and another for the alumni who entered post-elementary, with a more complex application process.

Results and Organization:

When I began this study, some of the questions I was looking to answer were what is the relationship between progressive institutions and the community they admit? Are admissions preferences awarded to particular kinds of people, and if so who? What effects do this institution have on black and brown students' identity construction and how does that affect them after they have left the school? Another question that I am looking to still answer, is what can be done to make these institutions better, and more inclusive. Not to insinuate that their schools aren't already high standard and inclusive, but with education there is always room for development.

My overall research has shown that this school has long lasting effects on the experiences of black students. I found myself expecting to find that those who graduated from the school regretted their experience. However, I was wrong. Although almost all of them went through similar hardships involving peers, teachers, and issues at home. Almost all of these hardships were connected with their identity. These hardships varied in my respondents between gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Most stated that they had to "grow up faster" and that they understood themselves "from the worst circumstances." However, despite those traumatic experiences, they endured a great journey of self-discovery. All of them found themselves more confident, outspoken, and most importantly, comfortable in their brown and blackness. Throughout my project, I use "private school" and "independent school" interchangeably. Independent schools are just a type of schooling under the larger private school umbrella. Additionally, you will see that I use the words "Students/People of Color", "Black" and "Brown" interchangeably. This is only because my respondents used these words

interchangeably to either describe or identify themselves, or specific communities that they are discussing. I am simply using their language in order to amplify them, and the communities they are trying to speak to.

My introduction is divided into 2 different parts. Part one is an in-depth analysis of the history of education in the United States. Starting out with stating the intentions of American schooling ideals to finding the roots of the fight for the education of black and brown children, I try to trace the legacy of inclusion and equal rights in education. In part two of the introduction, I reveal the complicated and interesting world of private progressive schools. I discuss how private schools were born out of the purpose of exclusion, and how the progressivist education movement looked over the voices of people of color, despite having an egalitarian world view.

The rest of this project is divided by the different phenomenon I noticed between all the respondents. When transcribing the interviews, I found certain trends in experiences that everyone shared, which linked back to their educational environment. Chapter One is titled Racial interpellation and “the moment”. This chapter is about the revelation that most black and brown students had in which they are reminded that they're a person of color. Drawing from Frantz Fanon’s personal experience of racial interpellation in “Black Skin, White Masks”, I take my respondents own moments of racial interpellation, and interpret how it made them feel. I lastly explore how the institution’s particular environment allowed these situations to happen.

In Chapter Two titled “On the Ideology of Space and Belonging”, I explore out the different spaces that students occupy in the school. I start by mapping out the entire campus of NYPS, and noting how it physically differs from most schools. Then, by looking at the cafeteria, the class room, and “Mr. Johnson’s” office, I highlight the importance of space and place. I use the voices of my respondents to discuss space occupation, space transition, safety, and inclusion

to attempt to construct a narrative of educational space experience. I end this chapter by discussing how whiteness; specifically, affluent whiteness functions as a type of property ownership that prevents those who do not fall under this category, from exercising agency.

Chapter 3 is titled "On Language." This chapter focuses on the use of jargon and the English language in NYPS. There was an overwhelming response about the way students communicate to the institution about their academic issues, and the school's ability to actually deliver the things that they asked for based on how they ask. I found that students who use a specific dialect, as well as reach out for support in a specific way often times get it. Those who struggle with asking for help, as well as having their teacher understand them, struggle academically. I also point out how this effects how parents relate with students. The way parents and teachers communicate with each other has much to do with their socioeconomic status, as well as if they are an English speaker or not. I found that those whose parents do not speak English, or who struggle to understand teacher's particular way of speaking, are disconnected from their child's life at school. Lastly, I conclude that nothing is really being done to accommodate these families who do not speak English or do not speak in the same dialect as most do in the schools.

My last chapter "The paradox of Diversity" targets the issue of universalism in progressive education. I note how the egalitarian approach to "diversity" and "multiculturalism" in progressive education has worked to silence students of color. The terminology used in discussions of diversity and multiculturalism are purposely ambiguous so they can integrate everyone into the community. This rhetoric welcomes overall difference. However, I note that in matters of education it's important to be specific as possible about what kind of community one wants to construct, along with the values they wish to instill. If an institution tells all students

they are all the same when they are clearly not, this turns a blind eye to difference and the real-life inequalities that come with them.

In my conclusion, I take a deeper look into the experience of Nina, one of my respondents who had a unique experience compared to the rest of the alumni I spoke to. I reveal a little more about her personal background before NYPS, and then discuss her reflection of her experience years later. Then, I revisit my questions that I asked in the beginning and attempt to answer them through using the voices of my respondents. Based on Nina's specific experience, I draft potential large solutions to the issues brought about by my research. I come to the conclusion that NYPS needs to not only have higher representation in faces, but also in school values and culture.

Introduction

"Getting Schooled" in America

In most studies of schooling I have read in my educational career, there has been a stark absence of experiences that mirror mine as a black woman. Since leaving my independent, PWI[1] high school, I have become eager to understand the structural significance of where I came from, and the relevant literature and theories trying to explain it. When I would sit in different sociology, human rights, and anthropology classes, I learned a variety of different things that somewhat applied to me. I found out that schooling was really not intended for people of color at all, that there were gender preferences in the classroom, and that no matter what school you went to, social class played a huge role in the "success" of your future. However, through all of this, I still couldn't see a significant amount of narratives like mine. Any time that students of color were discussed in anything I read, it was from the perspective of a low income, public school setting. Even then, students became statistics, and poorly illustrated examples. It wasn't really the connection to text that I was looking for. I found myself shifting through different studies to try to make sense of my high school experience, and if anyone else had gone through something similar before me. However, I couldn't pinpoint the explanation of a narrative similar to mine. Once looking even deeper, I realized there isn't much literature focusing on independent schooling at all. When I did find some, it was concerning majority boarding schools, based in the south, etc. Once again, not really the thing I was looking for. I soon became so dissatisfied with the lack of literature that I could find, that I decided to conduct a study myself. Who better to speak on an experience I was looking for then myself? So, I began to look into the studies of minority students in independent PWI high schools.

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[1] Predominantly White Institution

Background of American Schooling Ideals:

In 1900, most American Schools aimed to assimilate white immigrants into American life. The curriculum was the same for both native born and immigrants, the only requirement was to speak English. This left most immigrant children behind, without their parents to help them with schoolwork or English. Instead, most just ended up leaving school altogether to work and make money for their family. Some specialized schools were made for immigrant and black children who needed specialized attention and a different curriculum. However, American officials didn't enjoy that these immigrant students were having special cultural schools away from the American norm. In 1877 the US Commissioner of Education stated "If we do not Americanize our immigrants by luring them to participate in our best civilization. They will contribute to the degeneration of our political body and thus, de-Americanize and destroy our national life". School was then used to prepare students to be "active" citizens who would participate in American democracy. It was stressed that the new immigrants coming in were from "generations of ignorance" and "untrained"[23] so by any means necessary schools should try and transform these immigrant children to a new patriotic American identity and shed their previous one that they associated with home. Under these ideals, schools took students without taking into consideration the social/emotional needs of the student, specifically the immigrant student who made have needed special attention catching up. These schools continued to only teach in English, and attempted to make all students literate in it, as well as being verse on

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[2] Graham, Patricia Albjerg. (2005). Schooling America: how the public schools meet the nation's changing needs. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 3-50

[3] Clotfelter, Charles T. (2004). "The Private School Option." In *After "Brown": The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation*, 100-25. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7sxjd.10.

"American patriotic lore" (i.e. McGuffey reader) in order to "enforce citizenship to participate effectively in the American democratic process". Patriotism in these schools turned out to just be a blind commitment to Anglo America.[4] In 1900, the NYC School Superintendent stated that "[the goal of the school] is to teach an appreciation of the institutions of this country and an absolute forgetfulness of all obligations/connections to other countries because of birth/descent". Around this time, the idea of sorting students within schools "by evident or probable destinies" were also implemented. This was intended to sort students by learning styles but this also meant sorting of race, gender, and ethnicity and in some cases wealth.[5] Most children had no choice but to try exist in this machine-like patriotic school system, until an alternative came.

Students of Color in American Schools:

The journey of children of color in integrated schooling starts exactly after the landmark moment of the Brown V Board of Education civil rights case. This decision made history for the Civil Rights Movement as it overturned the Plessy V Ferguson verdict, that had established racist "Separate but Equal" policies. Not many families were in favor of this ruling at all, and sought out ways to adjust. However, a huge factor in this integration process ruling, that wasn't considered was housing segregation. A Lot of the state and federal policies seemed to overlook the close relationship between school choice and residential segregation policies. The government had developed desegregation plans for each state, however it paid more attention to

[4] Graham, Patricia Albjerg. (2005). Schooling America: how the public schools meet the nation's changing needs. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 6
[5] Graham, Patricia Albjerg. (2005). Schooling America: how the public schools meet the nation's changing needs. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 48

inter-district segregation rather than between districts, so each state was not properly prepared for integration between district residential areas.[6]

Although schools were desegregated, didn't mean that neighborhoods were. As an attempt to try to navigate these issues, many other Supreme Court cases following Brown V Board that sought to figure out the logistics of integration, and what the adjustments would represent on a district level basis. An example of these complications is found in *Keyes vs School District No. 1*. In *Keyes,* a small integrated town was concerned about amplified segregation in their community from the intra-district boundary changes as a result of *Brown*. However, it was found in its decision that the race labeled school districts that depended on school choice and catchment areas[7] were very similar to the system redlining from the FHA. These actually ended up desegregating an otherwise integrated area. The process labeling the areas and schools based on race, encouraged segregation, by displaying which area to avoid for parents who may not have been in favor of the new integration policies. This process kept minority children concentrated in particular areas.

Those who were not in favor of the Supreme Court rulings, saw this as an opportunity to attempt to seek refuge in schools that were located in predominantly white, upper class districts across the nation. This process is called “White Flight”. The families involved in this process also left the public-school system all together. In the 1960s and 1970s, white enrollment in private schools increased, particularly in majority black school districts and continued into the

[6] Reardon, Sean F., and Ann Owens. (2014): "60 Years after Brown: Trends and consequences of school segregation." Annual Review of Sociology 40 pp. 199-218.
[7] An area from that shows which students are eligible to attend a local school.

90's particularly in the South.[8] As a result, district public school segregation was about 40% higher than residential segregation because of whites attending private school in black school districts. Other Research shows that the families switched schools, but did not switch residences (from these former studies) come from majority upper middle class families[9]. Fast forward to the late 1970's and 1980's, it's found that there exists a huge difference in minority school enrollment that remains as a legacy from these earlier practices. White school children are more likely to attend private school than minority students. In a study, around 13% of white 8th graders and 11% of white 11th graders attend private schools,[10] in comparison the 9.2% and the 8.7% of minority students.

Part 2:
Why Private schools? Private schooling and "Alternative Learning"

Around the time of the 1920's until the 1940's, The American education system had already set itself up to be dysfunctional. A lot of schools were not only overcrowded and rundown, but parents felt that the education their child was getting was not as attention based as they would like. With the mixture of both immigrant and American children in schools, along with their separate needs, some kids were lacking individualized attention and being left behind. Parents suddenly wanted less of education based on citizenship and more catered to their child and their needs. This moment of dissatisfaction was the birth of the Child Centered Schools.

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[8] Clotfelter, Charles T. (2004) "The Private School Option." In *After "Brown": The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation*, pp. 100-125. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press,. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7sxjd.10.

[9] Renuzulli, Linda A., and Lorraine Evans. (2005): "School Choice, Charter Schools, and White Flight." *Social Problems* 52, no. 3 pp. 398-418. doi:10.1525/sp.2005.52.3.398.

[10] Fairlie, Robert W., and Alexandra M. Resch. (2002): "Is There "White Flight" into Private Schools? Evidence from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey." *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 84, no. 1 (pp. 21-33) http://www.jstor.org/stable/3211736.

Fresh from the ideas of John Dewey and the Progressive Movement, Child Centered schools presented themselves as the better alternative to the rigid formal school model. The curriculum was to be formulated around the student and their experiences. It was seen that if a child's education was modified to suit their interests, then they would learn better. Ideas of virtue, creativity and self-expression replaced test scores, memorization and punctuality. The classes even broadened to incorporate aspects of the arts, like writing poetry, or painting.

The parents of these schools mostly felt the normal schools weren't doing enough so they took action to seek the best for their child. They loved the image of their kids getting individualized attention by top rate teachers (fresh out of liberal arts colleges). Mostly children from middle/upper class families attended these institutions. Some of them had tuition, while others were free with the help of generous donors who sought to have their children admitted too. However, it is also important that a lot of the children who attended these schools received the same kinds of information at home. In Patricia Graham's *Schooling America*, she discusses how these types of education to the privileged community show little purpose or impact.

> For the children of privilege who attended them, these schools were a magnificent supplement to the rich educational environment of their homes and communities...These were the sons and daughters of professional and managerial classes who mostly lived in urban and new suburban communities where success as adults came to the well-educated, where public libraries with special sections for children's books were widely available, and where the community norm and expectation was college for all at a time when less than 10 percent of their age group were college students.[11]

The children who went to these schools came from the best families who were used to the linguistic experimental types of learning, so it actually made academic achievement easier. The

[11] Graham, Patricia Albjerg. (2005). Schooling America: how the public schools meet the nation's changing needs. pp. 66 New York: Oxford University Press.

experience of the students in school were so close to their lives at home, so essentially, they were the basis of their own curriculum. School districts often failed to mention that their students came from this demographic in order to take some of the credit for this success. Although these students in these child centered schools were provided with a world of opportunity outside of the school, lots of other children were left behind.

The Progressive Education Framework:

Progressivism has its roots dating back to the 1800's. Back then, this middle class based movement was centered on "the power of the man" to make his own. Through free market, privatization outside of the government, Progressives thought to individualize themselves from the rest of the society by setting an example that they could shape their own experiences beyond what was being given to them. By establishing an overall sense of morality based in service, and individuality, Progressives during this time wanted to create and organize institutions for themselves, and in turn for the betterment of society. How this movement became centered on education is through the need to help children become individuals, and agents by letting them construct their own curriculum and do on their own. As C.A. Bowers describes in *The Ideologies of Progressive Education: "*It was the progressive educator's commitment to the value of individualism above all else, that set their classrooms off from the more traditional approach to education. Memory work was abandoned as children were taught to organize and draw meaning from their own experiences."[12] At this point in American Education, its overarching purpose was to prepare young children for citizenship, and to become active participants in their own democracy. More importantly it rejects the strict tradition discipline of

[12] C. A. Bowers. (1967) "The Ideologies of Progressive Education." History of Education Quarterly, vol. 7, no. 4, , pp. 452–473. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/367463.

memory based, single-classroom teaching. Progressive education favors the engagement of the individual pupil as well as group discussions, more informality in the classroom, and a wider curriculum to encompass more ideas. It also favors the creative use of environment in the form of laboratories, gymnasiums, kitchens, etc., in the school, anything to stray away from the single classroom model. It was found that children learn more by doing and being actively engaged with their surroundings and corresponding material.

John Dewey is a scholar, teacher, and educational philosopher. He was born in Burlington Vermont in 1859 and died in 1952. Dewey is known as the "Father of Progressive Education", because of his theories of education and non-traditional approaches to schooling. His most celebrated works of writing on education are "Democracy and Education", and "Art as Experience", where both focus on alternative ways to learn, and how to incorporate these alternative ways to empower the masses through education. Dewey believed strongly in the student's ability to learn through their experiences and they should strive to meet their own goals, as opposed to the criteria set for them by schools. School curriculums should represent the life of the student. Unlike most models of teaching, which relied on authoritarianism and repetition, progressive education asserted that students must be involved in their own education.

In the late 1800's Dewey implemented the "Lab Schools" at the University of Chicago which he sought out to test his educational theories on actual children. These schools were called the "Lab Schools", and they took place at the University of Chicago. It started from 12 students and one teacher and grew up to be 140 children with 23 teachers and TA's. These lab schools were in fact, actual laboratories with researchers and specialized teachers who all collaborated to

see what methods worked best for the students.[13] The school had nontraditional classes on subjects such as cooking, and the general history of mankind and its development. The most influential part of his work in Chicago, was that it brought humanization and creativity back to teaching. Most educational methods and institutions were dry and dissociative when it came to appealing to their students. What the student wanted didn't matter, because they had to memorize and learn what was given to them. Dewey's experiment brought freedom and individuality back to the classroom.

However, what was failed to be mentioned in most of Dewey's works, was the demographic that he was focusing on in his experiments. All of the students in the Lab School, were white, and a large majority of them came from the wealthy educated classes. So, the teachers and students ended up both learning from a single experience. Which for the most part, worked in the context of the school. The larger question that exists is are his teaching methods, and if they are still applicable today in the racially, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse classroom. In all of Dewey's writings, there was a common theme of universality. In fact, the progressivism rooted in his logic, is that despite the prevalence of race, all humans-and students were perceived as equal.[14] However, this pedagogy can cause silences in alternative narratives that do not align with those in these schools. For example, in his methods, race was taught historically linear. This means that students learned how the (human) race had developed over time through somewhat of an evolutionary lens, as opposed to discussing the long-term implications the legacy of race had on the human race today. Starting from "Primitive Man", all

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[13] Hickman, Larry A. (2009) "John Dewey: His Life and Work" In *John Dewey Between Pragmatism and Constructivism*, edited by HICKMAN LARRY A., NEUBERT STEFAN, and REICH KERSTEN, pp.3-18. NEW YORK: Fordham University, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x04bp.5.

[14] Thomas D. Fallace (2011). "Dewey and the Dilemma of Race: An Intellectual History, 1895-1922." pp. 7 *The Journal Of American History* no. 3: 853. *JSTOR Journals*, EBSCO*host*

the way to the socially developed "civilized" man. This lesson may pay close attention to the ethical questions that involve humanism and "the nature of man" as seen in Locke and Hobbes. But this process completely skims over the historical significance that race held, and still holds.

Allowing students to learn from their experiences, and strive for themselves sounds revolutionary at first. As a result, most private schools adopted this framework, and it worked. Students were learning and enjoying their education as a part of their experience. Most regarded Dewey and other progressives as being extremely transformative in how we think about education and teacher training. But in the context of a homologous student and faculty body it seems too soon to make these claims. It becomes hard to ignore the success of this framework, and its success being tied to the demographic in which it was being taught to. Even down to the material being taught, there still seems to be a missing piece in displaying the diversity of the world. This may just be an oversight on behalf of the whole movement, but at the same time, it is difficult to see it as completely unintentional. Schools like The New York Progressive School who have adopted the progressive educational model are faced with the responsibility to fill in the blanks, but it's undecided that can it be possible with its homogenous, middle class centered roots.

Admissions, NAIS, and the Independent School System:

Perhaps one of the most interesting processes in independent schools are those of admission. Unlike public schools, they do not just admit anybody, and unlike charter schools, Independent schools do not take a gamble on who they admit out of a pool of applicants. The admissions process is one of constant selections. It is actually somewhat similar to a job or college application. Despite what age you enter, there are rounds of paperwork, testing, interviews, and evaluations. Almost all schools want to have "more diversity", but this means a

variety of things to different schools. Some schools want to include more students of color, others want more low-income students, and some may even want religious diversity. The thing is that through the application process, this is never clear. In highly selective schools such as NYPS, it is interesting to think about how they are able to craft a class, from pre-k all the way to 12th grade. What are the different components of the admission process? What sorts of things are they looking for? Are there preferences awarded to particular types of applicants, and if so how much? It's important to look into the constructions of these institutions and answer; what does a "New York Progressive School Student" look like?

At NYPS, parents and students can apply at grades Pre-K, 1-5, 7, 8, and 10th. The application fee is around $100, and one must apply in the fall. If a child is coming into the school at Pre-k age, they will be set up with a playgroup with other applicants where they are evaluated for a little over an hour to see how they interact with other children, as well as follow directions from a counselor who is also present as well. At ages 7-10, young students are required to take the Educational Records Bureau's (ERB) standardized test. The ERB gages the level of preparedness that the student has before entering an independent school. Similar to that of a SAT, the ERB has a reading, math, science, sections based in logic and reasoning. In addition to the ERB test, students have to have an interview with a faculty member. Out of my 13 respondents, 5 came in around pre-k/kindergarten age, while the rest came into the school from the 7-8 grade school window.

A majority[15] of these students also had been introduced to NYPS through a handful of specialized programs called Head start Programs. These programs hold the purpose of finding outstanding kids of color from public schools and recruiting them to attend private, independent,

[15] 5 out of 13 respondents

and specialized high schools all across the northeast. It serves as a way to give inner city students who perform at advanced rates, access to a higher level of education. One of the better-known programs called Prep for Prep is a competitive New York City program that collaborates with public schools to recruit high performing students. Starting in the 70's, Prep for Prep picks out promising students from their school and have them apply to independent schools. Students then complete a 14 month long rigorous course during the after school during the academic year and over the summer, to prepare them for independent school level work. Once the coursework is completed, Prep students apply to 3 different independent schools depending on their likelihood to get in, and then pick one to attend. Some independent institutions go so far as to reserve special spots in each 7th grade class for Prep students, reserving on average 12 million in financial aid for their arrival[16]. There are also many other programs, some even starting as early as in kindergarten. The main objective is to grant access to a greater level of education to students who may otherwise never get the chance to. The main issue with them is

The New York Progressive School's independent school status is a part of what makes it is distinctive from most. Independent schools are nonprofit, independently funded, and run. Unlike most private schools that may depend on an organization, or public schools that receive funding and have to operate under the government, Independent schools like NYPS rely on alumni endowment and donations to keep itself up and running. NYPS raises money for school maintenance, financial aid, technology, and so much more through their annual fund.

Most independent schools also hold membership to an organization called the National Association of Independent Schools or NAIS. Established in 1962, as a collaboration between the Independent Schools Education Board (ISEB) and the National Council of Independent

[16] Young Blacks at the Nation's Highest-Ranked Private Boarding Schools. (2003). *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, (41), 56-59. doi:10.2307/3133767

Schools (NCIS), NAIS is a nonprofit membership based association that provides a various amount of services and support to independent schools across the United States. Their services include, data collection, advising on financial aid, school governance, and resource management, as well as provide conferences and opportunities for fellow NAIS schools for networking. As of 2017, there are 1,789 total member schools, 82% of those schools being day schools, while the rest are boarding schools.[1718] 87.9% of the schools that are in membership are boarding schools.

NAIS is also responsible for the two most popular conferences in the independent school network. Started in 1986, the People of Color Conference or POCC, serves to demonstrate [their] "commitment to equity and justice in teaching and learning[19]." The purpose of the conference is to give teachers, administrators and educational leaders of color (or their co-conspirators) the freedom to discuss how their work intersects with their identity. The conference changes locations each year, and lasts around 3 days. It is comprised of a comprehensive a series of lectures and workshops with affinity groups[20] exploring the annual theme, and ends with the closing ceremony. POCC's student companion conference; the Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC) started in 1993. SDLC has a similar format to POCC, with an extremely rigorous schedule (first workshop is at 8:30 AM last one ends around 11:00 PM) which says a lot about the format, and the difficult material that is used to work with the students in workshops and affinity groups, and their ability to keep up with it. Throughout this study you will hear a handful of members mention SDLC and the impact it had on them.

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[17] National Association of Independent Schools (2017, March 2) *NAIS 2015/2016 Annual Report* Retrieved from https://www.nais.org/media/Nais/About/documents/FY2016-NAIS-Annual-Report.pdf

[18] National Association of Independent School (2017, June) *About NAIS* Retrieved from https://www.nais.org/about/about-nais/

[19] National Association of Independent School (2017, November) *2017 NAIS People of Color Conference Retrieved from* http://pocc.nais.org/

[20] A group of people linked by a common interest or purpose, in this case it is by racial affinity.

The New York Progressive School:

The New York Progressive School is located in the Northeast Metropolitan area. It started as a small free kindergarten where anyone who applied was admitted, and those who could afford to pay tuition were actually turned away. However, after some time, they changed their ideals of the school to accept those who could afford to donate and pay tuition. This mostly happened because of the people who donated to NYPS were upset that their kids couldn't get into the school. The decision to admit upper/middle class students was justified by saying that the previous admissions process was "class based" and that it would be unfair to deprive the children of the donors the opportunities and advantages their parents were giving to others. The school noted this change as a plus, because they felt that the lower-class students can actually learn "refinement skills" from upper class students.

Currently, the school has grown to almost 2,000 students. There is also over 300 faculty members between different school campuses and out of them, 25% of them are faculty of color. With self-identifying students of color making up 49% of the student body. Between these students, 7% are African American, 8% of students are Asian, 0.05% are American Indian, 5% are Latino, 0.35% are Middle Eastern and 16% of student identify as Multiracial.[21] Out of these categories, 79% of the total student population pay full yearly tuition ($47,000). Under 10 percent of the rest of the community pay tuition ranging from 0-80%. 20% of the student body have received financial aid from the school.

NYPS still root themselves deeply in the ideals of progressive education, which manifests itself to a mandatory ethics curriculum, and an extensive diversity program. The program entails a whole department devoted to issues of diversity and inclusion, along with a committee who

[21] This does not include a percentage that chose to omit telling the school their race/ethnicity

meets with school officials and administrators on expanding their goal of equity and inclusion. It also provides a list of resources for people to better educate themselves on the language of diversity in curriculum, as well as a plan for the lower, middle, and upper schools. These initiatives have been established in the school fairly recently. The earliest of these initiatives dates back to 2013, but since then, NYPS has made a commitment to keeping it on the forefront of their message.

Chapter 1:

Racial Interpellation and "The Moment"

Every student who came in, young or old experiences these things that I like to call "The Moment™". These Moments represent the moment in which a child (most commonly with a child who is put in predominantly white environments) realizes that they were of color. Formally, this phenomenon is called Racial Interpellation.

The concept of Interpellation as a whole, came from Marxist French philosopher Louis Althusser. He was born in Algeria in 1918 died in 1990 at the age of 72. He attended school at École Normale Supérieure in Paris, and he eventually became Professor of Philosophy there.[22] As a Marxist thinker, some of his best-known works are *For Marx* (1965), Reading *Capital* (1965) which both grapple with the philosophies and theories of Marx, as an attempt to interpret it.[23] His most revolutionary work, has to be an essay called *Ideologies and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970). This body of work analyzes the relationship between the state and the subject by looking at the different state systems at work, and its psychological effects on the subject. Althusser argues that the state implements societal institutions as a tool to promote specific ideologies and control the way we think. Examples of these institutions or "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISA's) are found in schools, churches, and even in our family dynamics. An example of how we internalize these ideologies, is through interpellation.

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[22] Lewis, William, "Louis Althusser", (Spring 2018), The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/althusser/

[23] Richard Wolin "Louis Althusser" Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica, inc. April 28, 2015 https://www.britannica.com/biography/Louis-Althusser

Interpellation explains the process of when we recognize ourselves as subjects under the ISA's. Through this process, we encounter our culture's values, and begin to internalize them as agents and institutions of the state. Interpellation works by calling someone by name, or not by name out in the street. By recognizing them, you accept the particular identity that one has offered to you. For example, if a police officer says "hey lady!" and a lady turns around, they are accepting the position as "lady" who responds to the police when called by them. This also shows that the "lady" recognizes the police as an authority figure, and as a figure that they have to yield to at all costs. Through this view, there is a dependency on the one being called out, to recognize the other. If one does not turn around to being called out to, then this process is disrupted.

However, the concept of 'Racial Interpellation' although not formally called 'Racial Interpellation (this is a more recent term) was actually visited almost 20 years earlier by philosopher and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. Fanon was born on July 1926 in the West Indian Colony of Martinique.[24] After leaving his middle-class home in to fight with the French in World War II, he moved to France to complete his studies and eventually work at the University of Lyon. It was in his time here where he began to feel the personal effects of racism, as an educated black man neck deep in predominately white colonial culture.

His first and best-known book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon processes the levels of racial consciousness as he is living through it. In his experience, he explores the assimilationist relationship between the white French and the Caribbean natives who lived there. By using historical context and psychoanalytic theory, Fanon finds that colonialism has left a

[24] Charles Peterson 'Frantz Fanon' Encyclopædia Britannica Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.; June 16, 2017 https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frantz-Fanon

legacy of dependency and inadequacy that leaves black citizens eager to leave their own cultural practices in order to become closer to whiteness. Although he explains different examples of Interpellation throughout the book, Fanon describes his own moment of Racial Interpellation when a child points at him in public and exclaims, "Look a Negro!" After the child says that out loud, the mother simply, shushes him and they walk away.

An important thing to note here is how a child can be an interpellator. The Child's (rather quick) differentiation between himself and the subject (Fanon) of his attention, brings to reality the deeply inherent racial caste system that exists between them. A specific, historical ideology places itself onto Fanon as a subject and the child as the conspirator. In this situation, Both Fanon and the Child are agents of the state. The child, whose behavior suggests that they are an active agent of the state, represents freedom and unaccountability. Here, they are able to say anything to this Negro man, and are neither reprimanded nor acknowledged for it. Fanon on the other hand, is an inactive agent of the state. His only agency is to exist in the space allotted for him by the state. Any other agency for him to be himself or express himself is denied to him. Fanon states that "For not only must the black man be black, he must be black in relation to the white man[25]……. The white world, the only decent one, was preventing me from participating. It demanded that behave like a man. It demanded of me that I behave like a black man—or at least like a Negro. I was expected to stay in line and make myself scarce."[26] This means that under this white state apparatus, the black man's role is to 'be a black man' as defined by the white man. Even with Fanon as a black intellectual, who has degrees, is "well spoken", well behaved, raised by a good family, He is still no exception to this ideology. What struck Fanon the most in

[25] Fanon, F., & Markmann, C. L. (1967). Black skin, White Masks. Kindle Books Edition. pp. 90
[26] Fanon, F., & Markmann, C. L. (1967). Black skin, White Masks. Kindle Books Edition pp. 94

this situation that no matter how much he acts in spite of that line of thinking, he is still tied to that image of blackness. Even when we think that we have agency over our identities, we do not. Racial interpellation here is more of a complex process where one is forced to recognize themselves through the gaze of whiteness, whether white people are the interpellators or not. Even if you choose to ignore these situations (i.e. you do not hail to the call), you still acknowledge and internalize it. As Fanon says, it is the "fact of blackness."[27] Where one is placed face to face with their blackness.

For most people, this starts to happen at a very early age. Children as young as 3 have been proven to distinguish, and even discriminate against different racial groups by sorting people by face, and preferring one's face to another.[28]Young black children (around ages 6-7) begin to internalize this concept called *race constancy* meaning that "one's racial group membership is fixed and will not change."[29] As a result they begin to learn and observe how racial dynamics work around them. They recognize that they are the "other", and that makes them subject to a different kind of treatment. They may even have the ability to recognize privilege, either in real life or in media. However, because these kids are at such a young age they don't really know how to verbalize what they're experiencing around them until later. My respondents were around ages 4-8 when they first experienced their moments. Because this is a young age where children are still developing their personal attitudes towards race, many of my

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[27] Fanon F. (1952) "The Fact of Blackness" Essay.

[28] Pauker, K., Ambady, N., & Apfelbaum, E. (2010). Race Salience and Essentialist Thinking in Racial Stereotype Development. Child Development, 81(6), 1799-1813. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40925300

[29] Pauker, K., Ambady, N., & Apfelbaum, E. (2010). Race Salience and Essentialist Thinking in Racial Stereotype Development. Child Development, 81(6), 1799-1813. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40925300

respondents described that at the time they were unsure about how to feel or what to say. This is 'the first time' that they can process it.

An important component of this, is the rememory of the moment. The term "rememory" comes from black Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winning novelist, editor and Professor Toni Morrison in her 1987 novel *Beloved*. The word is used when the book's main character; Sethe recalls moments that have been forgotten. Throughout the book, she is confronted with these inexplicable moments of rememory that appear to seem almost new because she had tucked them away for so long. Morrison specifically uses the word "rememory" as opposed to just "memory", to represent how these events are separately stored in our minds. Memories are events that one can willfully call upon, while rememory is a recollection of the (usually traumatic) events that we choose to forget. Because they were stashed away in our conscious for so long, rememories come back abruptly and vividly, as if we are reliving it a second time. For my respondents, the interviews they gave me were a series of rememories each triggered by each other like a ripple effect. Some may be moments of interpellation, and some not. But the entirety of their experience seems to be a rememory followed with a detailed reflection on how it made them feel.

> "I was in the sandbox and there were two students and one student said I couldn't play with him because I was black. And that was something that was completely foreign to me, although this was my first experience in a PWI, I did grow up in a white neighborhood and had white friends, that was something that I never really encountered, so this was the first time I really encountered my race. And encountering that, going back it was really interesting to me, that student left NYPS. They didn't graduate with us. But really having that and right now I look back on it, and I talk to my mom about it as well, because there was this seemingly huge response from the faculty so it was much bigger than I ever thought at that time, it was definitely funny, because I spoke to someone in high school about it for a focus group they're doing, and I guess it got around and the teacher who was there ended up emailing me later saying that she remembered, and then having that conversation with her about that years later. And talking

> about how serious that was at the time but me not understanding it as a first grader." - Cassius

Cassius's moment here, describes another white child his age (essentially an equal) makes a comment to him on an otherwise neutral, safe setting: a sandbox. There exists something innately innocent about the image of a sandbox. It makes this even more confusing and disquieting for Cassius. He describes that even though he's been in predominately white environments before, he's never "encountered" his race before. His experience almost mirrors Fanon's, where Cassius seems more surprised if anything, that this thing happened to him. He explains that the event was "foreign" to him at the time, which describes how unfamiliar this event was to him. He revisits the whole ordeal and the events that followed as thought provoking, for him and the people around him. When he mentions talking to the teacher who was there years later, he also uses the word "funny" to note how coincidental it was that he had the opportunity to speak to her and process the event through her eyes. It's assumed that there is a tension between the recognition of one of his earliest memories as a form of racism, and at the same time, there is still a distance felt from it because it was so peculiar. He fails to understand the event as something that had happened to him, but more of an isolated issue. For the most part, Cassius could have forgot about this moment. He grew up, the student left, he felt no attachment to it. However, what had stuck with him is how it made him feel. Clearly, despite his lack of understanding, Cassius was deeply shocked and disturbed by this event. So much that it followed him into adulthood. He had never encountered his race before because he had never encountered the word "black" as a (restricting) factor of his identity. In this moment, Cassius isn't a just boy playing during recess, but he is a black boy playing at a white recess.

Predominately white institutions are particularly difficult places for both black and brown women because they have to endure an intersectional view through white eyes as both a person of color and as a woman.[30] For adolescent black and brown girls entering high school, they have to navigate their own personal identities while at the same time finding ways to construct them in spite of the interlocking systems of sex, race, and in other cases class, gender, and sexual orientation. They are subject to judgments on their bodies, their speech, their mannerisms, and their ability to perform well in an academic setting. There is a lasting image of young black/brown women as "loud" and "ghetto" that infiltrates itself into the classroom and impacts how both students and teachers alike see them.

> "I remember there was this one time where someone had called me 'ghetto fabulous' my freshman year at New York Progressive School so I remember at first laughing and thinking it was just a joke but at the same time being uncomfortable by it because I was the girl from the Bronx who speaks-like I remember countless times especially my first year there being told that I had an accent or that 'I speak funny' and it wasn't necessarily my bilingual-ness that would influence my English, it was more my vernacular? I don't know. and then I remember saying 'oh I have to speak differently' and like, police my language while I was there trying to speak more in full sentences and not in slang and speaking "white" like the other students whatever that meant"- Gabrielle

The term "ghetto fabulous" used by Gabrielle's peers here, reflects a deep stereotype about black and brown women from low income communities. To be ghetto fabulous can mean a various number of things. One of the more commonly known meanings is to depict a "poor attempt at mimicking a life of luxury through the conspicuous consumption of cheap, tacky clothing or accessories."[31] "Ghetto fabulous" or even just the word "ghetto" paints a picture of a

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[30] Lori Walkington. (2017). How Far Have We Really Come? Black Women Faculty and Graduate Students' Experiences in Higher Education. Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, 39, 51-65. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/90007871

[31] Katrina Bell McDonald (2006). Embracing Sisterhood: Class, Identity, and Contemporary Black Women. Roman &Littlefield. pp.139

low-income woman of color, who is loud just to be loud, cannot "talk correctly" and is disruptive in comparison to the white environment around them. This is also seen in where Gabrielle says that her peers told her that she "spoke funny", and it wasn't even an accent. Her speech is not normally something that she was aware of, but after this, she became very critical of the way she spoke. With the examples of the Antilles Negro learning how to speak French instead of Creole, Fanon says that with taking on a "white" language exists a desire of a person to be closer to white.[32] In this situation, Gabrielle's language is a part of her identity that was criticized. Her jargon, did not match that of her peers. There existed a lack of understanding. Gabrielle had to quickly learn how to talk like everyone else, in order to be heard. In turn, she saw it as something that she needed to get rid of to be recognized by her white peers.

These images are seen most in pop culture and are often played up for laughs in the media. Something that comes to mind is the image of the 2007 popular character Bon Qui Qui on the sketch comedy show MAD TV. Her dark lined lips, long nails, and accented slang indefinitely play into existing preconceived notions about low income, specifically Latina women in the U.S. These images that exist in the back of the minds of their teachers and peers, make it difficult from black and brown students from these backgrounds to try and locate an identity for themselves, because theirs is being located for them.[33] Aaliyah, also describes similar feelings on these stereotypes: [I felt] "like a token, or almost like a show sometimes, because who I am and how I carry myself how I talk how I express myself my mannerisms, were like funny to everyone else. In this like 'you're a caricature of a ghetto black girl' kind of way not in a you just told a joke kind of way… so it's like how do I continue being myself without giving you

[32] Fanon, F., & Markmann, C. L. (1967). Black skin, White Masks. Kindle Books Edition. pp. 1
[33] Collins, Patricia Hill (2000). Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. Routledge. pp. 69.

the room to continue treating me like this caricature." Observe the relationship between language/jargon and recognition. Aaliyah and Gabrielle both express difficulty in being acknowledged and accepted for who they are, and as students. Their identities became divided between what their peers perceived of them, what they perceived of themselves, and what both groups saw as acceptable behavior and speech. Gabrielle was policed by the way she spoke and Aaliyah by the way she carried herself. The institution and the school's community did not recognize them as students. In both situations, there are stereotypes placed on both women and both find themselves in a difficult position where they didn't know how to be themselves without playing into existing assumptions about their personalities. This resulted in a certain pressure for both Aaliyah and Gabrielle to essentially "choose" whether to play into the stereotype or to try to be the exact opposite. In these environments, they found it difficult to be themselves because their community wasn't allowing them to both be themselves and a member of their community.

There is a level of hyperawareness that is felt when people of color occupy a predominately white space. This feeling exists to both the people of color who are underrepresented in the space, and the white people who notice them. What is most different about these two moments however, is how gender and this feeling of hyperawareness and surveillance display themselves differently in this setting.

> "I always felt there was an extra pair of eyes on me. I felt like there were times people wanted me to slip up, um not just people in particular but I've been living like that my entire life, and I'm going to continue to live like that for the rest of my life, there's this thing my friends and I would be like; you know, we already had two strikes, so we did everything we could to be the best students we can be and luckily none of us ever got in trouble in our time at NYPS"- Marcus

> "I remember second grade, I mean I guess I've always known I was black or partially black, but it wasn't until second grade when I became friends with another black girl in the class, who was one of the only other people of color at the time. And I think it was definitely a thing at NYPS. Like the teachers wanted to make sure we were friends and I

just remember like-I don't know, it seemed like kind of ***this thing*** that we should be friends."- Sonia

Black boys in school always describe a distinct feeling of being "watched". This feeling is especially prevalent in predominately-white schools. Even in his experience being a student since kindergarten, he felt that there was an "extra pair of eyes on him". Most people who have been in the same educational setting for a long time would have expressed trust or comfort in their environment; however, Marcus's sentiments suggest the opposite. A majority of black children have this anxiety in the classroom, and with reasonable cause. In an eye tracking study done by the Yale Child Study Center, it was found that educators of all races were more likely to glance over at black boys over black girls and white children in classrooms as early as preschool.[34] It was also shown that in the elementary and middle school ages, black children exhibit a greater number of anxiety symptoms than white children;[35] however in high school white children tend to surpass them. Marcus's sentiments about feeling watched are valid. Here Marcus notes that him and his friends already have 'two strikes', and they "did everything they could to be the best students". The two strikes simulate that they are already marked. Therefore, because of that marking, he applied pressure on himself and his friends to carry themselves a certain way so administrators would not subject them to any judgment. Marcus's awareness of his own watching reflects a deeper issue about the surveillance of black boys in school, and how it effects the way these children see themselves.

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[34] Gilliam, Walter S.; Maupin, Angela N et al. (2016) Do Early Educators' Implicit Biases Regarding Sex and Race Relate to Behavior Expectations and Recommendations of Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions?, Yale University Child Study Center

[35] Gordon-Hollingsworth, A. T., Becker, E. M., Ginsburg, G. S., Keeton, C., Compton, S. N., Birmaher, B. B., … March, J. S. (2015). Anxiety Disorders in Caucasian and African American Children: A Comparison of Clinical Characteristics, Treatment Process Variables, and Treatment Outcomes. Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 46(5), 643–655. http://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-014-0507-x

The same goes for Sonia. She expresses her awareness that it was an ordeal that she and this other black girl become friends. However, this is a surveillance in a different manner. Sonia is watched for whom she socializes with. There is an automatic assumption that Sonia fits in with the only other black person in the room. There are two possible explanations for what happened to Sonia. Either the teacher implicitly sees two black girls and unconsciously assumes that they should be friends because they are black. Alternatively, the teacher saw the two black girls and thought that they should be friends, because they thought that black girls should stick together. Either way, both reasons are false assumptions based on how Sonia and this other girl looked. Although this does not necessarily reflect a super negative experience, it's a glimpse into the implicit biases, and associations made by teachers.

In these moments, we are held responsible of the presence of our bodies. In these cases, children, as young as five are subjected to bearing the burden of all the history, and pain of their race. They become conscious, and begin to internalize their position. Moments of racial awareness are differ from any other because it is both historical and visible, and that's what makes it so significant to these students. They are subjected to what race feels like before they are given the language to understand it. In this meeting of past, present and future, creates this moment where we are struck with the reality of being black. Even though we cannot explain it at the time that it's experienced, it's heavily branded in our memories. Nobody else may remember it, or even realize what was happening. However, as we grow up we find ourselves constantly revisiting it. It stays on replay in our minds, with a hope to try to make sense of the moment and how it truly made us feel.

Given these relations of power under this institution of schooling, these students find themselves in a place of uncertainty and self-doubt, while others who do not notice these

relations are afforded a type of security, away from these experiences. As seen in these moments of interpellation, it makes students vulnerable, and inactive, both as students and as citizens (that the school is supposed to teach them how to be). These examples imply that there is a hidden code of conduct that only exists for students of color based on these different experiences of the school. The fact that administrators and teachers are failing to recognize these interactions as detrimental, shows how blind they are to recognizing the students and their experiences as different from their peers.

The most important takeaway from these experiences is that they happened in an educational environment. None of these incidents occurred outside of the NYPS. Even more importantly, nobody else noticed them except for these students. Although schools are supposed to be a safe space, it is lacking in the correct kind of safety for all students. Because the environment is majority white, it takes on that predominate culture. This culture makes it difficult for anything else that does not fit into it, to make itself present.

Chapter 2:

On the Ideology of Space and Belonging

The 18-acre main campus of New York Progressive School is located in a quiet historical suburb northeast of Manhattan. Built in the early 1900's, the buildings are large, stone and sit on the top of a hill like a castle. The campus sits at the head of the neighborhood and has a prominent appearance in the area. Most are usually surprised that the school is a campus, because the form resembles that of a college. It almost says to you "this is an institution of higher learning, and we're proud of it". It screams dignity and tradition. NYPS technically has three separate locations, on two different sites. One building in Manhattan, and the other being a campus with three main locations buildings for lower, middle and high school. The lower school is a four-story building with a playground and garden. The middle school is a single three-story building that shares the athletic facilities with the high school.

However, the high school is the beacon of it all. It's series of buildings that are interconnected in a circle, around a lush green quad. Each building is around two to three stories that are designated to an academic subject, and are labelled in "100's" (ex: 100's building, 200's building etc.). The classrooms are small, either with desks arranged in a circle or in large roundtable format. The high school features a two-story cafeteria, an art building, library, multiple computer labs, an auditorium, two dance studios, Science laboratories, and student rest areas. The high school facilities also include an extensive athletic complex with two fields, two basketball courts, a weight room, a yoga room, and a swimming pool.

The spaces in school provide a lot of insight into how they are used. Spaces may exist physically, but they are ideologically produced. The way we inhabit, enter, exit, or transition from one space to another has a lot to do with how we think, our self-perception, and our

relationships with one another. It is not the space that sets the guidelines on certain spaces, but those who populate the space. Whether academic, social, physical, ideological, personal or public, students navigate through these spaces, and experience themselves differently. My interest in spaces is rooted in my research of how students of color conduct and view themselves in this all white environment. These spaces in school make it difficult for students of color to act freely and feel welcome in their community. So instead, these students often resort to creating their own spaces outside of those given to them.

Students of color especially experience themselves differently because they are in an environment where there aren't many of them that take up the space there. There are two different experiences of space presented on the behalf of the students of color at NYPS. Transition and habituation. Transition represents the newcomers who had come into NYPS around middle school age, usually from public school. These students grapple with the transition from their old school to NYPS, and learning how to carry themselves within this new space. However, Habituation refers to the “lifers”, those who had been in the school from Pre-K all the way to 12th grade. These students have a unique perspective on the school, because while the school is a space that has technically been their own for quite some time, they still tend to feel like strangers in their own home. Starting by looking at how these students initially came to be at NYPS, then exploring the cafeteria, classrooms, Mr. Johnson’s office, and what the space means as a whole, these students take note about how these spaces made them feel about themselves and the environment they were in as a whole.

Out of the 8 students I interviewed who came in between the ages of 7th grade and 9th grade; there was an overwhelming response about the change between their old schools and NYPS. Most of my respondents had previously went to a predominantly Black and Latino public

school. This abrupt transition, from public to private school can be very harrowing for students. Coming from their old public schools in the New York City area, private schools are a completely new world. First, they physically have to travel from their homes to the predominately white, older area that NYPS is located. With the exception of some students who took the school bus, other students took the MTA for as long as an hour both ways each. Gabrielle describes, “I've lived in the area my whole life and never realized this part of it existed”. Gabrielle describes how her personal world had opened up because she witnessed a complete physical change of scenery around her. Another reason is the academic experience. Public schools in the New York City area on average have average class size of 26 students, with an average student to teacher ratio of 15:1[36]. Almost all schools are in one single building with little to no resources made available to them. Some participants described the reality of not seeing everyone in their class graduate. At NYPS, the average class size is 10, with a student-teacher ratio of 7 to 1. One of the reasons this shift is so extreme for students, is because some of these students didn't believe that such a place could exist.

First Impressions

Besides the physical size of the school’s campus itself, some of them had never been exposed to white people, let alone wealthy white people. Something that was learned quickly when trying to make friends, is that if you don't have money, then it was difficult to participate in the school culture.

> "The environment was something that I feel like I was going up against all the time, and I guess at first I thought it was "the 14 year club[37]" but then people started coming in 9th grade, the white kids, from whatever other school that

[36] NYC Department of Education; November, 2016 “New York City Class Size” http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres 190A9737-57AB-4FF2-9846-46469139D450/0/201617NovemberClassSizeReport.pdf

[37] Been a student of the school from Pre-Kindergarten to the 12th Grade, equating 14 years at the school.

> doesn't go up to high school, and then they would just integrate immediately into "popular" groups, and by popular I mean like rich and white groups obviously they like ran everything and they had you know like in hindsight, I'm able to put words into these experiences but it's you know, the kids whose parents who was working all weekend as like venture capitalists and like they always would have free cribs so they would host gatherings and the kids who go to the probably didn't have parents like mine, the kids who would go to that probably lived in the city....I was able to kind of act like it wasn't real and I found myself trying to aspire to be a part of it"- Brianna

One of the respondents named Jesus also told me "A lot of the culture revolved around money. Like a lot of people there had come from an economically wealthy families, so those people hung out with each other. Your popularity was tied to how much money you have". Both Jesus and Brianna state that they noticed how your socioeconomic status was indicative of who you were friends with. Brianna tries to justify it by saying it was only because these students knew each other for a long time, but after other white newcomers entered, she realized it was because they were from money. Brianna also told me in her interview that she spent a lot of time with other kids of color and low-income white kids who didn't exactly fit into this narrative. She also points out that they both differed in familial culture, which was a part of their social class. She says that the white kids who had the privileges that she didn't have with her parents also contributed to her socialization there. Around half of my respondents also had this same sentiment, that some of the things that the other white kids were allowed to do, they could not. This could range from going out every weekend to asking for a tutor. The agency that white students exercised as agents of themselves and their school seemed closely tied to privilege.

Participants mostly stated that they were not ready for the environment that was NYPS, even if they had preparation from a Head start Program. Even through My respondents came from two different programs: Prep for Prep and Oliver scholars program. Both programs are an academically intensive program that spans for two summers and during the school year in

between the summers. Upon admission, students take courses focusing on the subjects needed to take the SSAT and the ISEE,[38] as well as courses that they would need to catch them up to speed with the independent school curriculum. In addition to academic preparation, students are also taught time management, goal setting, and research skills to help them become better students. My Respondent Nina, who was a part of the Oliver scholars program, said that they also tried to give her and her peers a glimpse into what going to an independent school would be like as a person of color. She describes a special class dedicated to discussing PWI's called: "New Scholar Seminar" as well as special panels where Oliver alumni would visit and talk about their current experiences in independent schools.

> "They had verbally told us, you know Oliver told us 'the students you're going to be around are predominately white and predominately wealthy' and they taught us skills to try and prepare us for that, obviously we all toured the school beforehand and we had seen what they were like, and they taught us to not make assumptions they prepared us for potentially even racist comments or microagressions we would experience. They tried to prepare us as much as they could we had a whole course, I think it was called new scholar seminar, but it was dedicated to the types of social things to prepare for in independent schools and every week we would have panelists, of current Oliver scholars who were in these schools already. Like they would come and talk to us about their experiences. So, we had learned like-on paper, but it's a completely different experience when you're actually in it and living it"- Nina

Nina describes her very thorough preparation process before entering NYPS. The Oliver program as she describes, was extremely rigorous and tried to the best of their ability give these students an honest glimpse of what it would be like in an independent school. However, what she had learned about in this program was nothing like experiencing it for herself. Even when you receive preparation, you are still unaware of how you feel. Learning about whiteness for Nina was completely different from experiencing it. Coming from an entirely black background, having little to no experience with white people, and non-black people as a whole, attending

[38] The Secondary High School Admission Test and the Independent School Entrance Exam

NYPS was a culture shift. Even though she had more cultural preparation than her Prep for Prep peers, she stated that the main thing she had to adjust to is simply learning how "to sit in a classroom dominated by people who didn't look like me learning to learn among people who didn't look like me or had significantly more money than me or possibly even thought they were better than me." That was something that was impossible to prepare for. Nina's experience almost mirrors those who came into the NYPS later. It's almost impossible to learn how to prepare for something that is completely different. Academics were something that students could eventually catch up to, but this new white and wealthy environment was a constant challenge.

The Cafeteria

Although there were many things that could have stood out to my respondents, I found it interesting that many noted the food first. The question asked was "What were the differences you noticed from your old school and NYPS?", and many immediately began to describe the size of the cafeteria, the options made available, or even their favorite meal. Aaliyah is a Dominican Prep for Prep alumni. Her old school was a large public school located deep in the Bronx. She entered NYPS with a small group of other girls who were in her prep cohort. Here, she remembers the first time she went into the cafeteria for lunch.

> "Something that was huge to me was lunch. Like what the f*ck? There's a whole buffet here, y'all have a salad bar? Hold on you have a sandwich bar wait a minute, you got a soup section? Hold the f*ckin phone! You got a new dessert every day? Now wait a minute. I went in there and lost my shit. I was like what? How is this even possible? Coming from eating with sporks, from eating on a Styrofoam sectioned plate and you have two options and you get what you get and you don't get upset you either got the hot food or the pre-packaged Pb&j sandwich. And so going to NYPS and having all of this just all of this stuff and then hearing from people like 'oh my god this lunch sucks, let's go off campus I'm like what? You have real utensils?! What are you talking about?! You have grilled cheese what do you mean?"-Aaliyah

Food is something that deeply personal. It's intimate. Your opinion on food is linked to your family, your culture, and your childhood. Therefore, when Aaliyah came into this new environment and saw the large cafeteria with the food, all of what she thought she knew about food and school food immediately came into question. I would say that this feeling was same for the rest of my respondents. These students were fully immersed into the world of elite private schools in this space. Although many aspects of the school were different, there existed something special about the cafeteria. The cafeteria is a universal space where students gather to eat, to socialize to relax. This is one of the few times where students have the freedom to be amongst themselves outside of the presence of teachers. The cafeteria that Aaliyah thought she knew was one of restriction, and limits. Her old school only presented two options for lunch, on cheap plates with a spork as their only utensils. The cafeteria at NYPS represents choice and agency. There are countless choices of food you can eat, as well as the option not to choose anything inside the cafeteria at all and to go off campus. Lastly, the cafeteria is a space where these students come face to face with inequality. It reimagined what these students thought they knew about school lunch from their public-school experiences. It reaches far beyond their expectations. Here these students come face to face with what they have been missing. What they thought to have never existed. This encounter also puts them in confrontation of the other students who are also in the cafeteria space. We can see that Aaliyah, and the other kids she describes saying that they are unsatisfied with the food are put at odds with each other because while she sees nothing wrong with lunch at all, these other students do. Both Aaliyah and the other students are experiencing this space differently. Aaliyah as a newcomer didn't imagine that such a space could exist, and is grateful to have been invited into this space. However, the other

kids who have been in the cafeteria space for quite some time, are underwhelmed and often opt out of being in the cafeteria space.

The Classroom

Adapting to the private school culture proves itself as a challenge for both lifers and new students. For many of my Newcomers, this was the first time that they had ever come into contact with white people, let alone wealthy, privileged white people. These students quickly learned that if they acted the way they did in their previous schools, they would not make it at NYPS.

> "I had to abruptly learn how to carry myself in a place where I had no bearings no understanding of the culture there and no idea how I would have to make changes to fit there so that was...Prep doesn't do a very good job of preparing you for that so...I remember riding to an orientation with some of the other prep girls and talking about what the names of our friends were gonna be because we knew we were going to a predominately white school and like we're so excited to meet the Dylan's, and the Julia's, and the Sophie's, and alas! Wow there were many many Dylan's Julia's and Sophie's! But yeah. It's interesting that I was saying that I didn't know how I was gonna have to maneuver it I knew that it was going to be a culture change even before stepping foot there because this was on our way to the orientation……. I was just like not what everyone else is used to. I had to learn how to code switch[39] really fast and really abruptly, I had to learn to- I mean it took years but just trying to retain a sense of self at a place where you are very aggressively an outsider or just like not the norm"-Aaliyah

> "I feel like I was accepted into the school and then I kind of started there and no one from admissions remembered they left this little girl from the Bronx like who was doing this big transition into their school and never really checked in after that, and so when I was having my moments of culture shock and having a tough time in NYPS I feel like as an actual institution of education it was not supportive"-Gabrielle

Aaliyah and Gabrielle describe a frustration that many students who come from public schools to a PWI have to deal with. Both students were accepted into the institution and from there were left to fend and learn for themselves. Unlike the preparation that Nina had gone

[39] The process of shifting from one linguistic code (language or dialect) to another, depending on the social context or conversational setting (2017)

through, both Gabrielle and Aaliyah had no idea of what to expect from the environment there despite the intervention of their head start programs. Aaliyah during the times where she had visited NYPS had joked around with her peers about the all-white environment, but when she had arrived it suddenly became less of a joke and more real. Aaliyah along with a physical transition went through an internal transition where she had to shed her previous identity in order to gain respect from her community. She describes being so different from what the norm was that it made others uncomfortable. In addition to changing her mannerisms, she had to learn to code switch fast, which is something that Gabrielle similarly went through when she described changing her language to sound "whiter". Aaliyah also illustrates the difficulty in balancing this new prep school identity with her own personality. This frustration is shown a lot in studies of racial identity formation. It's found that those who come in frequent contact with white people on a daily basis have a subconscious awareness that their ability to succeed is contingent on aligning oneself with white language and white values.[40][41] Although Aaliyah is made uncomfortable having to silence some parts of her identity, she is aware that it's what it takes to become well integrated into this space. In drastic transitions of space, there also exists transitions of the internal space and sense of self. As seen with both Aaliyah and Gabrielle, students of color who are not used to this space struggle with their identity, and how they view themselves.

However, this wasn't the case for all of those who were newcomers. Interestingly enough, two of my respondents didn't really have much difficulty integrating into the school culture.

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[40] Spencer, M., Swanson, D., & Cunningham, M. (1991). Ethnicity, Ethnic Identity, and Competence Formation: Adolescent Transition and Cultural Transformation. The Journal of Negro Education, 60(3), 366-387. doi:10.2307/2295490

[41] Tatum, Beverly Daniel. (2003). "Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?": and other conversations about race. New York: Basic Books,

Despite the environment being very different from what they were used to, they were able to immerse themselves in the space to their fullest without sacrificing identity.

> "For me it wasn't as big as an issue because I prided myself on really having a firm idea of who I was and a firm sense of self and I'm really proud foundation culturally going to an all-black, not only going to an all-black middle school but a middle school who taught and celebrated black culture and taught us to love our blackness and black culture so I really entered NYPS with a firm sense of self and a firm knowledge of who I was, and I never really questioned like whether or not my blackness was valued and my blackness was important, I didn't go into NYPS wanting to be like those rich white kids because I was taught to love myself for who I was."- Nina

> "I was surprised how big the school was. It took me a while to realize the economic side of things like it took me a while to realize my friends were really wealthy, like I would hear about what my friend's parents did and stuff.… Nobody really talked about wealth, but you would go into people's houses and be like oh. But it helped me understand myself in those kinds of environments, where you're the only brown kid in the room and feel comfortable and assert myself in those situations"- David

Both Nina and David express that even though their backgrounds are different, they felt no reservations in making their voices heard in these spaces. Nina, a black woman from an all-black background, went to an African cultural lower and middle school. It was there from a young age where she learned about African history, and the African American experience. Nina credits her lower and middle school background that helped her positively shape her identity into who she was. It was her all black lower and middle school where both the population and curriculum reflected who she was. Because of this, she says she entered into NYPS with a solid foundation on who she was as a black woman and how her voice was just as important as those "rich white kids" who went there. Unlike Aaliyah and Gabriella, Nina entered the space and didn't feel as if she was lacking something, or that she had to shed something in order to be a part of it. For David, the most shocking thing for him was seeing the class differences between him and his peers. However, as opposed to thinking that he had less than, he found a way to be comfortable being the only person of color in the room and maintain his sense of self. Both here

are experiencing spaces differently than the white wealthy majority and they are aware of their position, however they both do not allow it to alter how they view and experience themselves as people of color in a PWI.

Similarly, to the experiences of Nina and David, Lifers slowly become aware of their positions as people of color in their predominately white environment. However, their experience of self-awareness is much more gradual, as they were in the institution for a considerable amount of time. These students enter this space at a young age without any consciousness of race. This is partially due to their young age but also on the part of NYPS's "we are all equal" curriculum. This attitude begins to shift as these students become more racially aware of who they are through moments of interpellation. They are then stuck in a peculiar type of position where they feel the subjugation of the institution but are still appreciative to how the institution played a large role in their growth.

> "It's interesting to grow and figure out who you are at NYPS but once you leave NYPS, you realize it's really not in any way indicative of the world at large and like I kinda had that whole process over again once I left NYPS."-Sonia

> "I sought after those [outside] diversity opportunities because I did feel different at NYPS and this was a chance to basically talk with others about that difference and how basically they navigate their differences in their school and then passing on the knowledge that I have…. I would have a sense of togetherness of those discussions where we would take those conversations outside"-Cassius

Sonia and Cassius describe how NYPS made them view themselves, and how being outside of that space made that self-view completely different. It took going outside of the NYPS environment for them to realize who they are as people of color. Sonia describes her process of re learning who she is once she went to college. She thought she had a firm idea of her identity upon leaving NYPS, however once she left, she found it no way indicative of how the world at large was like, so she had to re-orient herself in college. Sonia's process serves an an example of

how the school as a whole, fails to present the world in a realistic view. NYPS as an institution is so close-minded that the people in the space construct identities only to that specific space, but not as their larger roles in society.

Cassius describes actively going outside of NYPS to try to connect with people outside of the school. This process of engaging with people outside of the NYPS made him reaffirm his identity as a student of color. Cassius was involved in many different conferences amongst the US including the NAIS Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC). SDLC is a conference that connects different students of color across the United States for a three-day rigorous conference, exploring issues of identity, and going over the proper terminology to use to define our own identities. Both Cassius and Sage had attended the conference, and both had very positive experiences there. Sage said; “I just learned so much that I was ignorant to, I saw other people learn stuff that I was ignorant to I got to reaffirm myself in all of my identities, it was just.... just the energy was so special and just so different from what I was used to at NYPS”. In engaging in these outside spaces, both Cassius and Sage were able to explicitly discuss their experiences with different people who were going through similar issues as them. Both of them felt that NYPS was not offering the things that they needed as students in the institution. After participating in those outside spaces, Cassius felt the need to bring what he learned back to the NYPS community in hopes helping someone else in need. Here we see the people of color doing the work that the institution should be doing. Cassius took it upon himself to bring all he learned back to the community at NYPS because he felt that they could learn and benefit too. However, Cassius shouldn't have to go outside of his learning environment to provide the necessary tools that should be provided in the first place.

Lifers find themselves looking for something more from being inside the institution for so long. Often time, they find themselves ready to leave by the time they graduate because they have been around the same space around the same people and ideals for their educational career. Although at times it feels like being a stranger in one's own home, lifers find resources outside of NYPS that give them the confidence and reformation that they need to grow.

Mr. Johnsons Office

Amongst these spaces of discomfort, there exists alternative spaces where students of color gather to reaffirm and uplift each other in their emotions and experiences. One of these spaces is Mr. Johnson's office. Located at the most central part on campus, Mr. Johnson's office became a space of refuge for students who needed a break from being "the black student". Cassius told me, "I feel like going into [Mr. Johnson's office] was like a breath of fresh air every day". These spaces are often referred to as "counter spaces" because the often exist opposite predominately white spaces.[42] It serves as a space outside the formalities of a classroom where students can feel free to validate each other in all of their racial identities. Racial grouping is often a response to environmental stressors. Because these identities often feel minimized or misrepresented outside of these spaces, students see counter spaces as a place of refuge to escape the daily stressors of being a black face in a white place. Actively, sitting together also asserts racial identity in these environments. The appearance of black and brown students gathering in a central space disrupts the atmosphere of whiteness on campus.

Mr. Johnson's office is also a place where strong peer networks are built. Many of my respondents stated that their communities of color supported them the most in times of need.

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[42] Carter, D. (2007). Why the Black Kids Sit Together at the Stairs: The Role of Identity-Affirming Counter-Spaces in a Predominantly White High School. The Journal of Negro Education, 76(4), 542-554. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40037227

These networks are often built during the high school ages (9th-12th grades) as opposed to a younger age. This is because it is around this age where young kids of color begin to ask questions about their identity and the people who they surround themselves with.[43] Arielle, a biracial lifer who grew up more accustomed to her upper middle class white mother's side, did have a close friend group of girls of color, but never thought to spend time with the other black and brown students in Mr. Johnson's office. However, towards the end of her time at NYPS Arielle found herself hanging out in Mr. Johnson's Office.

> "I feel like I found out about race really late for me, because having gone to the lower school was much more diverse, and I had a friend group with more people of color than most friend groups so I didn't really realize it until middle school-ish... I had a really unique experience in that when my sister came into the high school and I was a senior and I wasn't really a Mr. Johnson's office kid but I saw her and I followed her lead in that sense."

Arielle's unique experience as a biracial person who made friends with other students of color, made her feel secure in her identity. Later, Arielle does describe that she originally did not feel comfortable going into Mr. Johnson's office because she felt that she would not be accepted there. Arielle's biracial identity, her upbringing, and the racial makeup of her friend group differed her from most other social groups. Because Arielle had a different background than most of the other black and Latino students, she not feel welcome into this predominately black space However, once she saw her younger sister associate with the other students of color who spent time there, she felt much more comfortable and accepted spending time in the office. After seeing someone similar to her move through the space more easily, she became more comfortable following suit. A similar situation happened with another biracial student Riley. "I waited until I was older to enter that space when I became friends with people who went there

[43] Tatum, B. (2003). Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? revised edition. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com

often. Then it became the place I went to all the time". It wasn't until her senior year where she became closer with her community of color and saw the value in them. It is at this critical stage where students start to see themselves as the world around them sees them; as black and brown. These students find themselves associating with those who look like them, because often times they understand each other on a deeper level.

> "I got along with any grade because of the (basketball) team mainly, but I did find myself mainly hanging out with students of color, um, my best friends are all black. I didn't realize that until 7th grade and I was like wow I'm really surrounded because these kids I really connect with. but I never didn't get along with anyone-we just had the bond and connection that obviously I didn't have with the white students, nothing was; it wasn't necessarily a choice, it was just we connected were all in this PWI and the notion that we have to stick together, we're all we got"-Marcus

Marcus describes how he found his community of people in the black students at NYPS. Earlier in his interview, he describes becoming friends with all races of people when he entered in kindergarten. However, as he grew older it shifted, and he sees the significance in that shift. He states that his peer network is the only thing he has, because nobody else is there for him (as expressed earlier).

One of the positive outcomes of these peer networks is that often they create official spaces outside of just Mr. Johnson's office to make their presence known on campus. There were two different multicultural student run clubs, as well as a peer-mentoring program that served as spaces for students of color of all ages to meet and establish connections, as well as plan events, workshop filled Modified Awareness Days (MAD's) and assemblies to educate the white community about their respective cultures.

> I really took refuge in the other students of color at NYPS I really took refuge in my diaspora club and I really took it as a chance to educate people who I was around about who I was. I really used it as an opportunity to tell these white people who I was and what my culture is and how beautiful and valued and important I am."- Nina

Nina took these opportunities that her community offered to her as a chance to make her presence known at NYPS. It is in these spaces of sanctuary where people of color can come together and attempt to establish constructive spaces for themselves that the school would not create otherwise. That are often set up for generations after them. Not only do students of color find agency in these spaces, they take leadership roles and build strong foundations for those like them in the school.

Aaliyah stated in her interview countless times "NYPS isn't meant for us" or "That not who NYPS is for". There exists an important relationship between whiteness and property ownership. When white people easily occupy a space in its entirety, they own it. When Aaliyah says that the space does not belong to her, she means that it is not her property. In every sense of that statement, NYPS really isn't built for her. As educational theorist Gloria Ladson Billings and educational researcher William F Tate write in their article "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education", "Possession- the act necessary to lay the basis for rights in property- was defined to include only the cultural practices of whites."[4445] This means that physical property is only one aspect of this ownership. The practice of intellectual and cultural property in these schools. Because these spaces established did not originally have many black and brown students present, there was no need for inclusivity in them. Their educational foundations were established for a long time before black and brown kids entered these spaces. As a result, it was difficult for these

[44] Ladson-Billings, Gloria & Tate, William. (1995). Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education. Teachers College Record. 97. 47-68.

students to practice agency and ownership in a space where they were not originally welcomed in.

Chapter 3:

On Language

The use of certain kinds of language has proved itself to very important in succeeding in independent school environments. With Standard English as the accepted form of communication in the American education system, it has been deemed a necessity for non-white students to learn how to speak it. However, the specific jargon that is used at New York Progressive School, has reinforced itself to seem superior compared to other types of vernacular. This language has caused a myriad of problems students in this institution. It has made students feel ostracized from their other peers because they feel less educated than them. It has made students feel stupid because they may not know what the teacher prefers to hear in class like the rest of their classmates, and it can make people feel like the language that is spoken at their home is inadequate. The emphasis of this jargon in these institutions has been used as a structural tool so students who do not know how to use it fall behind socially, and academically. Without this language, you aren't fully seen. Although the reality is, this language isn't superior or inferior, it's just a different language that is related to power. Moreover, even if students do take on this language, they still struggle to be recognized. Language in this institution is a colorblind mechanism to socialize students in a specific way.

Some students who come to New York Progressive School from different schools have difficulty catching up to speed. Compared to their old schools, the academic material is advanced, the classroom setting is different, and on top of that they are still struggling to adjust to the new environment. New students also have trouble adapting to the new expectations of their teachers. Because more of their efforts are demanded from their teachers, students may not know how to appeal to what the teacher wants from them as a student.

> "I have one memory of ninth grade history class with a teacher who was from France and she was a history teacher, and she was very sweet but you know, I was into this class and I, I remember I was this big history geek! I liked social studies, it was my favorite class in middle school and so I remember getting to NYPS saying 'oh I'm so excited for this class' but then getting to that class and literally being afraid to speak like she would have to call on me because I would be afraid of speaking in front of my classmates because I didn't feel that I spoke as well as they did or feeling like I would be embarrassed to get the question wrong or not understanding the critical questions that they would ask of us at that age, I came from a school where the class size was over 30 students in a classroom where here it was unheard of to have that many people in a class so I just felt very you know like 'I want to blend into the wall' like 'don't call on me' like just let me just sit here and take my notes, and hand in my homework and get outta here"- Gabrielle

As before mentioned, Gabrielle struggled with gaining her voice in classroom settings because she felt that the way she spoke was inadequate compared to the way her peers and teachers spoke to each other. The shift from a 30:1 student teacher ratio in a classroom to a 7:1 ratio was a lot to adapt to. She describes that before coming to NYPS, she was a huge fan of history class. Gabrielle defies the social misconception of her being an uninterested student.[46] Here, she self identifies as engaged student and was excited about school. But because she is quiet in class, she appears as apathetic. All she wants to be is recognized as an active student but the classroom quickly became an unsafe environment for her. Gabrielle literally feared participating in class. She was afraid of what her classmates would think about the way she spoke, that she would look stupid for getting the questions wrong, or asking a clarification question. Jesus expressed a similar attitude: "I didn't want to be seen as dumb because I already felt less intelligent then the other students there. So I was like "I'm not gonna show them that I'm struggling, I'm gonna tough it out by myself". Both Jesus and Gabrielle have difficulty grasping what the teacher and institution expect from them as students, but they fear asking questions about it because they do not want to be further ostracized for asking. In this case, the "critical questions" teachers may be

[46] Downey, D., & Pribesh, S. (2004). When Race Matters: Teachers' Evaluations of Students' Classroom Behavior. Sociology of Education, 77(4), 267-282. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/3649390

asking for, isn't necessarily different from what Gabrielle is able to give, but the other she delivers it in a manner that is difficult for the students to understand. Students also fear delivering it in a way that doesn't suits the teacher's needs. There is a deliberate miscommunication that conditions the students how to speak the way the institution wants them to.

Another aspect of this language, is the language of self-advocacy. There exists a certain manner and tone that one must have in order to receive help. Most of my respondents spoke to the fact that they struggled in asking for help when having academic issues. It seems so simple in practice, where you just ask for help. It even appears that the institution is trying to instill independence in their students, however there is something that is much deeper than "I don't understand this, can I have help?"

> "I think that NYPS is the type of place where you or your parents have to advocate for you which is definitely problematic, you can definitely get ahead by advocating for yourself or someone advocating for you and like I think like- probably this has to do with being a woman of color and in a PWI[47] but it definitely made me uncomfortable to ask for help and reach out and advocate for myself in that way. And so I think that's something they need to work on. It's not a matter- your ability to succeed is not dependent on how to advocate for yourself in middle school and high school like that doesn't seem right"-Sonia

Sonia highlights something important here: that if you speak the language correctly you get the help. If one knows, or learns how to properly advocate for themselves, they are fully recognized by their teachers as a full and willing student. As before mentioned with Gabrielle's silence in class, if you are not equipped with this language, you seem careless and non-approachable and no help is offered to you. Brianna had stated in her interview "I think they misread my lackluster performance my disengagement as me just being disengaged". The willingness of a student in

[47] Predominately White Institution

education displays obedience and respect for both the teacher and the institution. If a student is unwilling, it means that they are irresponsible, or have no gratitude for this exceptional educational opportunity. Even as a lifer who grew up in NYPS learning how to speak the language for the most part, Sonia still expressed a level of discomfort coming to teachers for assistance. She still felt that being a woman, and black still warranted judgment from her teachers about her performance.

Although both lifers and newcomer struggle with self-advocacy, my research showed that asking for help is an especially a foreign concept to newcomer students. These students are considered the brightest and best students from public schools, or from their Head start programs. However, upon entering the independent school environment, the rigor of the curriculum and the culture shock end up being too much for these students to adjust to. Brianna recalls drifting through NYPS with mediocre grades, after being referred to a “star student” at her old school.

> "All I know is as soon as I got to NYPS, like I was a star student, I got into prep and stuff and as soon as I got into NYPS my grades were in the sh*tter, like 7th grade I think I had like a 2.0 average, I don't know but I was definitely getting C's as an average and definitely sustaining that until my junior year, and that’s when my college advisor intervened and was like "you're not gonna get into college unless you get your act together and raise your GPA to like a 3.0, otherwise you're not going to be very competitive”. And that’s to say you know, 'You don't have any connections with any colleges you're a first gen. student, and you're poor, like nobody is really going to be clamoring to get to you”. So my first intervention was way late and that’s not to say that my advisors didn't try, but I think it was an issue of cultural competency and like lack thereof say.”-Briana

Here, we see Briana interpreting her exact problem and solution. She states what her college advisor said to her, and then translates the language behind what they really meant. She states that they don’t have the training or needs to really support her as a student. As a student, she knew exactly what she needed to succeed but the people there were unable to give it to her.

Brianna mentions later that she was dealing with a lot. As a young kid from her background, making the shift from public to private school. Without having someone checking in on them at all times she says, they're bound to fail. Briana is also frustrated because she sees how unequal her situation is compared to her peers. She later mentioned how most of her wealthier peers had either their parents or tutors on top of them at all costs. Around her, she sees her other students benefitting from outside help that she needs but her family cannot afford. Riley also shared a similar feeling: "I remember being really being upset at my mom and our money situation because I was like 'Everyone in my class has tutors why don't I have a tutor?' and I was really upset because I was like 'this is putting me at a disadvantage and you don't even care.'" There is where one can see the large gaps in achievement between the low-income students and the higher-class students. Because of their wealth and level of parental involvement, higher income students succeed at higher levels than their low-income counterparts.[48] So when they come across academic issues, the impression is that these students are getting help or in some cases getting someone to actually do it. Megan also mentions how people in her year had specialists write their college essays for them. Despite their academic struggles, higher income students are able to reach out to their families and find professional outside help on their assignments. However, when low income student's struggle it is much more difficult for them to seek outside help, and they are often left to their own devices.

Additionally, there exists a lack of empathy for Briana by her college advisor and her teachers. Although she feels switching schools was a big adjustment for her emotionally and academically, the faculty and administrators failed to recognize her feelings as legitimate. There was an assumption that because she came from the highly competitive Prep for Prep, she should

[48] Yeung, W., & Conley, D. (2008). Black-White Achievement Gap and Family Wealth. Child Development, 79(2), 303-324. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/27563485

be able to adjust to the new environment easily. However, she states that her Prep for Prep background that didn't prepare her for this level of schoolwork, or even how to reach out for help. There is a huge pressure to succeed added on top of the stressors of being a new student in a new environment. Nina similarly expressed this same feeling when it came to asking for help:

> "It seems so self-explanatory now like just go and ask but for me it wasn't so simple, I had never struggled like that before and school had come so easy to me…I never really struggled, I think I truly didn't know how to ask for help and I never really felt like I needed help before so it eventually, my teacher was the one who helped me realize it wasn't the end of the world and it's just going to be a matter of asking for help and I should have asked for help sooner and went down a level, instead of struggling so much."-Nina

Because Nina has never struggled before it was difficult for her to ask for assistance when she needed it. Nina like Jesus, also expresses the desire to work out her issues herself. Because she has never struggled with schoolwork before, she was determined to figure her issues out rather than ask for help. Asking for help symbolizes weakness for Nina. If she asks for help on her schoolwork, then she's failed as a student. If she asks for help, then she feels that she may appear "dumb" and be judged by her peers. This is also a common attitude for black and brown students in PWI's. Because they are a minority, black and brown students feel an added amount of pressure on themselves to perform well. They feel that they must work "twice as hard" to prove themselves academically compared to their white peers. Despite whatever difficulties they face, there exists a need to prove themselves to their community. This is mostly because of the legacy of negative attitudes associated with black students and intelligence.[49] These students feel that their white peers and teachers already see them as unintelligent, so they feel the need to

[49] Fordham Signithia and Ogbu John, (1986) Black Student' School Success: Coping with the "Burden of 'Acting White'" The Urban Review, Agathon Press Inc. pp. 177

prove otherwise. However, this attitude often is the reason why Black students suffer in school, because they fear judgment in reaching out for help.

Language can also cause problems for parents almost as much as students. Active parent involvement has also been proven to be an important influence on a child's success in school.[50] When a connection is made between the household and school, it constructs a better student. The school becomes more aware of the student and where they come from, and the parent learns what is exactly happening with their child in school and how they can support. A majority of NAIS school students come from two parent, middle class households, where the parents have higher levels of formal education (college or above). This tends to leave the parents who are outside of this majority, feeling silenced and minimized in addition to their child. Middle and upper-class parents, both black and white, practice something called concerted cultivation[51] in order to try to sharpen their child's social and academic intelligence, and problem solve.[52] This is learned by most of these kids at a very young age. They see examples of their parents being active and advocating for them at a young age and try emulate it when they are older. Most upper-class students at this school ask for help because they think they deserve it. It is a part of the practice of privilege. Opposite them are the less wealthy students, who have not had this example growing up. This process can be extremely difficult concerning working parents, who may not have to time to visit the school often to meet with teachers. So, if there is an issue with a student in school, the student has nobody to represent them. It's shown that social class is an important factor when concerning parent involvement in schools. Lower and working-class families

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[50] Diana T. Slaughter and Deborah J. Johnson; foreword by James P. Comer (1988) "Visible now: Blacks in private schools "/Imprin New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 70-77

[51] When parents actively take part in all aspects of the child's life. This involves school meetings, counseling, after school programs or classes, and tutoring.

[52] Lareau, Annette. (2003) Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life. Berkeley: University of California Press. Print. pp. 233

practice a more independent process of allowing the child to "naturally grow", or basically allowing the child to navigate their own lives by themselves. Research has shown that the naturally growing process isn't necessarily a parenting style, but a result of a lack of time on behalf of the parents. Because they are often working, parents do not have the time to intervene often in their children school lives. Nina described to me that her parents weren't as involved because it was almost impossible for them. "My mother and father worked like dogs. Like my father... I don't think ever came to NYPS once with the exception of my graduation. Like my dad works as a welder and he works for six days a week, several hours a day, so he spent a majority of his time working…. My mother was involved as she could be given her job constraints." Working class and poor families tend to allow the faculty and administrators of the institution to handle situations involving their child. Additionally, because they do not know a lot about these schools, or how they function, lower class families tend to stay away. When these parents do try to involve themselves in school issues, most tend to feel that they are less adequate then they should be.[5354]

There exists this phenomenon called "The Pollyanna effect"[55] where the language used by the teachers and administrators in these institutions create misunderstanding. These misunderstandings result in a domino effect of issues because the teachers failed to explicitly say to parents of what they believe their child needs. An example would be that you are invited to the school for a meeting with a teacher. They ask "would you like to schedule a meeting to speak

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[53] Lareau, Annette. (2003) Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life. Berkeley: University of California Press. Print. pp. 240

[54] Diana T. Slaughter and Deborah J. Johnson ; foreword by James P. Comer (1988) "Visible now : Blacks in private schools "/ edited by Imprin New York : Greenwood Press, pp. 70-83

[55] Brown, P. D. (2013). The Pollyanna Effect. Retrieved April 29, 2018, from https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/fall-2013/the-pollyanna-effect/

about Billy?" However, this invitation is non-negotiable requirement. It is mandatory that the parent goes to the meeting. Upon meeting, the teacher attempts to soften the issue at hand by telling that parent all of the great qualities that Billy possesses, while discreetly throwing in that there may or may not be an issue with his performance. The parent is supposed to understand that something is wrong with their child and seek the appropriate help. However, why do teachers and administrators feel the need to address parents this way as opposed to explicitly telling them? Educational Psychologist Pamela Brown says

> "Mainly because the adults in the school don't know you well and don't want to offend you. They may not want to tell you that your child's previous public education is inferior. Maybe your daughter is significantly behind other students and they are rethinking whether she can catch up. In their concern about her academics, they don't know if they can ask you to work with her because they don't know if you have the ability to do so. They don't specifically mention tutoring because they don't know if you can afford tutoring. They are uneasy about saying something that draws attention to possible economic disadvantage. In their worry about behavior, they don't know if they can call your daughter on her disruptive behavior or on the language she uses because the school is not sure if that is part of your "culture."[56]

This power blind way of speaking, is intended to not be bias in teaching. However, it results in bias as these parents do not know the proper etiquette or language that these teachers are speaking. Teachers end up avoiding a real issue at hand that may affect their student. These teachers are accustomed to handling situations with upper-class students but are not properly trained to have discussions with students and parents who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. This leaves students struggling academically, and parents confused.

In some cases, it is literally that students and parents cannot understand the language the school is speaking. 6 of my respondents come from immigrant families, and a number of them come from bilingual households. They explained how stressful it was for them as students to try

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[56] Brown, P. D. (2013). The Pollyanna Effect. Retrieved April 29, 2018, from https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/fall-2013/the-pollyanna-effect/

and communicate what was going on at school to their parents. The idea of parent teacher conferences made them uneasy. Something that I never really noticed before as an alum that was pointed out to me by Aaliyah, was that any and every correspondence to the community was sent out in English only.

> "NYPS is not good at communicating with families who speak other languages because that's not who the school is for, so they were very bad at communicating with families that speak other languages, like I never once; not once received a newsletter or email in Spanish. Like you know how many Spanish speaking faculty are in that motherf*cker yo? And my mother couldn't once receive an email in Spanish? Every time I had a home reports went home and I had a conference I had to have a translator. They had to find somebody from the staff to come in and translate what my adviser was saying for my mother. So you know that this is what is going on for me at home, and never did they thing about sending letters home in different languages. And it's not even just Spanish! There are a lot of other languages spoken there. And that's an example of it's not a matter of not having the resources, it's just not a priority"-Aaliyah

Aaliyah made an important conclusion that when it comes to communication, it's not that the institution doesn't have the means, it's simply because they don't want to. NYPS is aware of which families cannot speak English well, however they do not take it upon themselves to have correspondence done in different languages. Above Aaliyah notes that these families are not who NYPS is for, which means that this school simply does not recognize these families. Because they do not speak English like the majority of the community, they are left out of it. As a result, these families often do not participate into any parent community activities, because it isn't outwardly made available to them. Even within social class, there is still a very prominent language barrier keeping non-English speaking families from participating in the community.

In "The Black Man and Language" Frantz Fanon highlights this difference in language between the Antilles Negro and the French as one of false recognition. He notes "The more the black Antillean assimilates the French language, the whiter he gets— i.e., the closer he comes to

becoming a true human being. We are fully aware that this is one of man's attitudes faced with being. A man who possesses a language possesses as an indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language."[57] Those who do not possess the language of the French are not seen, therefore blacks have to prove themselves through language. The same goes for students of color, low income students, and immigrant families. They speak this language in order to enter spaces and unleash opportunities that were closed off to them, but also to prove themselves as a deserving enough student to this institution. Fanon later says, "The feeling of inferiority by Blacks is especially evident in the educated black man who is constantly trying to overcome it.[58]" This means that despite speaking perfect French speaking perfectly people are still going to see you as a Negro. Once you learn to speak the language, or knew how to speak in this way for a long time, there is still a level of ignorance. For example, lifers grew up in this environment. They speak in the same manner that the institution that wants them to, but they still struggle with being recognized by the institution. It's not time or experience in the school, but the difference from the norm is what sets them apart.

The issue at hand is not just one of proper communication, but an issue of accessibility. NYPS does not take it upon themselves to try and properly include student and their parents in their space. Because of the power blindness that exists, teachers and administrators can only see and acknowledge the families that emulate the majority. The upper-class families, the legacy families, the families who donate to their annual fund. This process enforces a specific institutional identity that is the opposite meaning of diversity. They serve to make people more the same as opposed to letting them be different and diverse, because not everyone is trained to

[57] Fanon, Frantz (2008). Black Skin, White Masks Grove/Atlantic, Inc. Kindle Edition. pp. 2
[58] Fanon, Frantz (2008). Black Skin, White Masks Grove/Atlantic, Inc. Kindle Edition, pp. 9

attend to the needs of different students. Race aside, the school cannot see how it reinforces elitist attitudes by treating low income and immigrant families who do not fit in the image of their usual student. Through using their resources properly, and making the teachers more accessible and open to parents outside of just the conferences, maybe NYPS can build better connections with these families, and benefit their community.

Chapter 4:

The Paradox of Diversity

Progressivist Education in its own self representation circulates 5 key words: Diversity, Inclusivity, Ethical, multicultural, and citizenship. Separately, diversity means variety and difference, inclusivity speaks to being all encompassing, ethical means moral or righteous multicultural means relating to or constituting several cultural or ethnic groups and citizenship means the status of being a citizen in a particular society. Something that all of these words have in common is that they are all ambiguous and up to self-interpretation. Something that all these words are missing is specificity. All of these words represent a multitude of things. This language is extremely popular within the network of progressive education because it represents how their community is home to a multitude of things, but it is never specific as to what things. Are they aiming for racial and ethnic diversity? Socioeconomic diversity?

These institutions circulate these words in their mission statements, diversity statements, and strategic plans, but they also do not make it clear of what they mean by these words. They do not imply any intent of what they wish to look for in their community, as well as who their community is made up of. My research suggests that these terms need to be brought into dialogue with each other in order to bring to surface the real experiences of black students on the campuses of such schools, and use accurate words to amplify their experiences as a part of the New York Progressive School mission. Black students have to take it upon themselves to fill in the gaps that those terms fail to address. The words that my respondents use to describe the community are “rich”, “white”, and “colorblind”. Despite efforts to appear multicultural in community, in the reality is, the institution is still majority the same. Out of a total of almost 2000 students 51% are white. In terms of population that is around 900 students. The other 49%

are made up of 7% African American, 8% Asian, 0.05% American Indian, 5% Latino, 0.35% Middle eastern and 16% Multiracial.[59] In terms of class, 79% of the total student population pay full yearly tuition ($47,000), while the second largest (13.2%) pay around 80-100% of it. Out of this category, over 800 of those students are white, while the rest under this category are dispersed between (in order of greatest amount to least) Asian, African American, Indian, Middle Eastern, and Multiracial students. Under 10 percent of the rest of the community pay tuition ranging from 0-80%.

There appears to be a wide variety of races ethnicities across the board, but there still exists a large white presence in the student body, as well as an upper-class presence. The notion of "diversity" and "inclusion" in the context of a PWI simply means that these institutions are engaging with multicultural communities. Because some of the student's home communities that are different, the institution wants to ensure that they will not be treated as such. But the question is, are they truly engaging with these communities or just picking and choosing similar types of students with the exception of a few that fall outside the grain? Between the language of diversity and multiculturalism lie the experiences of black students.

The specific model that NYPS centers itself on, is one of Ethical Learning, Progressive Education, and Academic Excellence. All of these ideals explore what it means to be a member of the school community, as well as values inclusion and economic and racial diversity. They see all students for their varying cultures, backgrounds and beliefs. It is under this learning model where they acknowledge difference, but also make it their goal to promote equality and harmony in their community. This attitude results in a colorblind educational approach where both teachers and students alike avoid the subject of race and other aspects of identity like social class

[59] This is not including a percentage that chose to omit telling the school their race/ethnicity

and ethnicity. Professor and educational researcher Angelina Castagno calls this concept a "Powerblind Sameness". She uses the word "sameness" to represent the "belief that all students are the same and do not possess any differences that matter for the teaching and learning process."[60] "Powerblindness" takes on colorblindness and opens it up beyond just skin color. "Powerblindess refers to our reluctance and avoidance of race, social class, gender, sexuality, and other politicized aspects of identity that are linked to power and the distribution of resources in the United States."[61] An example of this method of thinking ignores how power structures operate and affect members of the school's community while also silencing the presence of students from marginalized that need to be recognized. At NYPS, students of color noticed how progressivism was a key part in their school's mission but also noticed how the school failed to be critical of their methods.

> "This notion of 'we are a super progressive school so we do not have to do any sort of introspection ever at all' and so what I found with the social climate was like 'well we have brown kids well we have Asian kids well they're here aren't they?' and like no one's calling them the n word and no one's calling them- you know and like; they're here and they have friends you know? … like stuff like that where it's like "sure we're here and sure you're not bullying us", but you're not making room for our narratives, and you're not making space for our truths and sort of; integrating us into the community. So, we're here, but are we with you? Are we in this together or are we just here?"- Aaliyah

Despite physically being present in these spaces with a small community with her, Aaliyah still did not feel a part of the larger school community. Although nobody is outwardly discriminating against them, she still feels unwelcome. Here, she questions the reason for the presence of students of color. Aaliyah feels that the community of color is physically there so the

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[60] Castagno, A. (2013). Multicultural Education and the Protection of Whiteness. American Journal of Education, 120(1), pp. 107 doi:10.1086/673121

[61] Castagno, A. (2013). Multicultural Education and the Protection of Whiteness. American Journal of Education, 120(1), pp. 107 doi:10.1086/673121 pp. 108

school can say that they have students of color, but they aren't actually engaging with this community. Through her experience, she notes that they're not making space for her experiences even though they're making room for these students to attend the school. There is tension between presence and belonging. Although these students are in the school, and attend classes every day, they still see themselves as outsiders. There also exists an issue where students are not being explicitly excluded, or harassed, they still do not feel connected to the community. And the community implicitly reminds them that they do not belong.

Although they are present in the community, and physically occupy space, participation is often made difficult for students of color. Because the school is majority white and majority upper class, the school's culture reflects that. This leaves the non-white lower-class students feeling ostracized, and problems ignored. Students are stateless agents because they are denied rights to practice agency, safety, and privacy in their place of residency at school. An example of this is in an incident that had happened at the school at the time where some of my respondents were still attending NYPS. Traditionally, the senior class does a prank in the spring, as they are about to leave the school. Some examples of pranks in the past include a mariachi band that followed around the senior dean for the whole day, or a water fight on the senior lawn. However, this grade seemed to be different. The senior class's dean; who is a black woman; encountered many issues with parents about the treatment of their children (mostly over the fact that she wouldn't give them preferential treatment when said children were in trouble). She also broke apart the generally straight white male oriented curriculum with upper level courses titled "Historicizing Whiteness", "Exploring Queer Identities" and "Contemporary Black Society". This teacher stood opposite of everything the school made itself up of, and also stood confidently. She was adored by many of the students of color, including myself. She was one of

the faculty advisors for both black and brown student organizations. This incident was an attempted prank on the senior class dean gone wrong:

> "I think it was supposed to be a campus wide prank like everyone is supposed to bring a watermelon and I think they were supposed to be covered in oil so that when you lift it up it would splatter and fall when you would lift it up. It would just be difficult. So, at first, I was like that's rude. So, it ended up that only 10 people brought in watermelons and so they were like "Ok let's just put it in her office" and they put a bunch of watermelons in her office before she got there, and so the first thing she saw was watermelons and she's like "what the fuck?" Like there's a lot of implicit implications here about giving watermelons to an African American woman and them specifically only being in her office. You know it seems like it was supposed to be a dean-targeted prank but it looked racially motivated. So, it was really really bad and she took the day off and they addressed it at the assembly that same day, another teacher got up and basically said "this is not cool" and then there was this row of 20 teachers on the stage behind him just sad and angry. "-Riley

After the incident, there was a wide range of reactions, including a school wide walkout where they had also invited alumni to come and speak out about the racial insensitivity felt on the behalf of students of color. However, post the incident, and post protest, the students of color who were there felt that they weren't heard, or welcomed by their community.

> Actually, I was shocked I didn't want to believe it. The first thing I did was call my mom and I started crying, I just couldn't believe that; at least at a place like NYPS who'll teach us that we're all the same, they'll teach us that there's problems going on outside of school and how we as a community need to change that, and then we go around and just do something like this it was just hard to take in, and then the atmosphere for the rest of the school was just awful, from everyone even from the faculty, there was just something that just didn't' sit well with us, and it still affects NYPS to this day to be honest" - Marcus

> "I mean there's always gonna be that white kid that's gonna be like "Oh they didn't know" right? And things like that or "maybe they're being too sensitive" I mean like, Mr. Johnson's office became a safe haven where students of color could go to if they wanted to cry or punch something, and we were all clearly distraught and the other white kids just went about their day and [I was] like, this is the difference this is what you don't understand" - Riley

Both Riley and Marcus describe feeling frustrated and emotional about the incident that occurred in their community. Marcus, who is a lifer, illustrates how as a child there he was

taught that he and his classmates were all the same and were also taught there are issues happening outside the school. It's important to note that he said that issues are happening outside the school. It seems that in his experience he was taught at a young age that the issues and inequalities he may have seen only existed outside of the community. It was also said that it was the school community's responsibility to change that. This line of thinking enforces that issues and inequalities do not affect the students present and for the most part, they don't. However, the students that are affected by these issues take note of this thinking and end up feeling isolated and embarrassed that these issues are a part of their daily lives. This teaches students at a young age to separate themselves from inequality, which is something that not all students have the privilege to do.

His kindergarten outlook was shattered by the incident, and made him view his community, and the place he knew for so long differently. The insinuation of sameness, and that issues happen only outside of their community, represent how the administration views these students as exceptions to the outside visions of inequality and racial bias. Riley describes how she felt that the white community didn't understand, and even questioned the validity of what the students of color were going through. From experience, she's observed how there is "always that one white kid". There is a consistent record of ignorance and insensitivity on the behalf of the white students which she makes clear is what separates her from the rest of the white students.

This ignorance is what is referred to as the "technical fiction of non-recognition,"[62] where people are reminded not to think of race even though it's unrealistic not to. People even go so far as to not try to acknowledge race when its clearly apart on the problem. As a result, these

[62] MUKHERJEE, R. (2014). Rhyme and Reason: "Post-Race" and the Politics of Colorblind Racism. In Nilsen S. & Turner S. (Eds.), The Colorblind Screen: Television in Post-Racial America (pp. 40). NYU Press. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qg55f.5

erasures turn into "re-racings[63]" of people of color in these progressive spaces. These re-racings of people work to try and overwrite some of the previous terms and associations when discussing race. If you don't say the word "race" you can't say racism nor can you call someone racist and the same goes for class or gender or any other type of marginalized groups. As seen in Marcus's statement above, this is often taught to students at an early age. The expunging of race discussion makes room for ambiguity. If race does not exist, in its place comes terminology that unconsciously shift the focus of what is meant to be said. Instead of saying "The Black Students" it is replaced by "Those students who hang out in Mr. Johnson's office". The "scholarship students" or "Low income students" automatically becomes "the Prep for Prep kids". It works towards "forgetting, getting over, moving on.... wiping away the very vocabulary necessary to recall and recollect, to make a case [or] a claim". Without race specific vocabulary, both students and teachers are left without proper tools to discuss the difference and inequality they see around them.

Because of the attitude of "color-blindness" that exists, these schools often do not feel the need to address the gaps of representation that exists in both the community and in the classroom. The result of such color-blind curricula is that some black students may believe that blacks are not appropriate persons to hold leadership positions or make cultural contributions through the arts and sciences. In Towards African Diaspora Citizenship, African scholars Dr. Carol Boyce Davies and Dr. Babacar M'Bow discuss how in the Global African Diaspora, African descendant peoples are often stateless agents because they are denied state rights in their respective areas of residency, as well as denied access to rights and information from the

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[63] MUKHERJEE, R. (2014). Rhyme and Reason: "Post-Race" and the Politics of Colorblind Racism. In Nilsen S. & Turner S. (Eds.), The Colorblind Screen: Television in Post-Racial America (pp. 40). NYU Press. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qg55f.5

diaspora. (aka: wherever their ancestry is from)[64] This in turn, makes citizenship difficult for them. They make the claim that these peoples have right to global citizenship, as defined as "in terms of contemporary understandings: as an individual legal participation in a territory of identification with all the rights and duties associated with that status."[65]

When asked one thing that they would change in their experience, all respondents replied similarly in that they wished they could see themselves more. Whether in the curriculum, the community, or in the administration or teachers, students of color express a desire to see people who they could ethnically, and racially identify with.

> "I would just change the makeup of the school, the population just on the basis of different identities I would just make it a lot more diverse because I think it would be beneficial to so many people going there just to be able to see and be around so many other people that are like them" -Sage (They/Them)

> "If anything I would have changed the amount of diversity in the school, but also being in there and not having much diversity was helpful in framing in who I am now, so I don't think I would be who I am without the exact NYPS that happened"-Daniella

> "I wish I could see myself more in the place that I spent so much growing up. Like 7th-12th grade is such a pivotal time for people to discover who they are and I just wish I'd seen myself in my environment more. I didn't see myself so I had to go through a lot of the hardships by myself because I didn't have someone older someone from my background to support me"- Aaliyah

Sage, Daniella, Aaliyah and a lot of other respondents all felt that what was missing in their high school experience was a community of both teachers and students of color. Sage feels that with more diversity, the people of color who attend the school could benefit greatly because they can connect with each other and build a bigger community. Daniella wishes that there was

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[64] McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. A. (2007). Black geographies and the politics of place. Toronto, Ont: Between the Lines. pp. 14

[65] McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. A. (2007). Black geographies and the politics of place. Toronto, Ont: Between the Lines. pp. 16

more diversity as well, however she is also thankful for the lack thereof, because with it she was able to discover more about herself. This feeling is something that a majority of my respondents resonated with. While they weren't appreciative of the process they had to endure to find themselves, they were thankful that under those circumstances they prevailed. Through hardship and trauma this institution had undoubtedly shaped these students, and "prepared" them for what life would be like past high school.

Lastly, Aaliyah wishes that there was more representation in the faculty. She describes wanting to see people like her in the place she spent most of her adolescence. She notes that with the presence of more teachers of color she could have better support through the hardships she experienced there. Research has also shown an association between the achievement rates of students of color the lack of relatable prominent figures in their school.[6667] Minority student achievement, especially in black students, is highly influenced by the lack of similarity felt between themselves and the teachers and students. In turn, this can have long term effects on their self-esteem, and identity, because students feel that they are not seen and do not view themselves as equal deserving participants in these institutions.[68] In general, the racial identity of black students who attend predominantly white private schools is not affirmed. It's assumed that if the school doesn't care about them or their issues, why should they care about school?

There exists a colorblind curriculum that combines different teaching methods and nonspecific curricula that intend to cater to all the different students at once. In her essay

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[66] "Visible now: Blacks in private schools "/ edited by Diana T. Slaughter and Deborah J. Johnson; foreword by James P. Comer Imprin New York: Greenwood Press, 1988 pp. 55-68

[67] Schneider, Barbara, and Roger Shouse. (1992) "Children of Color in Independent Schools: An Analysis of the Eight-Grade Cohort from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988." *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 61, no. 2, pp. 223., www.jstor.org/stable/2295418.

[68] Schneider, Barbara, and Roger Shouse. (1992) "Children of Color in Independent Schools: An Analysis of the Eight-Grade Cohort from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988." *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 61, no. 2 pp. 226

"Multicultural Education and the Protection of Whiteness", Castagno writes that "Believing that multicultural education is really about learning styles and teaching strategies allows educators to maintain the belief that schooling is apolitical and disconnected from the social injustices outside the school walls. [However] This is powerblindness at work. These beliefs, then, explain and justify the absence of educational practices that might begin to critique and change current social arrangements—thus protecting whiteness."[69] An example of this can be seen in Dewey's experimental schools. Instead of learning about history in a relational approach, he took on a linear humanist approach, where he taught on the development of man as a being,[70] instead of the progression of people in a sociological context. This technique can be seen as problematic, because it seems to ignore current and past issues that have gone on outside of school, and how they may or may not effect students inside of the classroom. Through ignoring how race and other factors of identity shape students in the classroom, institutions maintain whiteness as the norm. A learning environment like this makes it difficult for students who fall outside of whiteness to feel like the space is theirs to learn.

Black students do not see themselves or their own issues reflected in their own curriculum. These students are asked to connect with issues and topics that are either brief overviews about themselves, or about people and events that are not a part of their reality. The students also do not participate in curricula that supplies them with the language and narratives that could turn them in the proper direction to attempt to express how they feel as students of color in a predominately white institution, as well as make them feel as if they are not alone. In NYPS, there is a requirement that students must take ethics for all 4 years of high school. This is

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[69] Castagno, A. (2013). Multicultural Education and the Protection of Whiteness. American Journal of Education, 120(1), 101-128. doi:10.1086/673121

[70] Thomas D. Fallace (2011). "Dewey and the Dilemma of Race: An Intellectual History, 1895-1922." *The Journal of American History* no. 3: 853. *JSTOR Journals*, EBSCO*host* pp. 7

intended to make students critically think about difference in a larger social context. However, Brianna remembers that this just skimmed the surface of important discussions that her peers and teacher needed to be having.

> "[On the ethics curriculum] I think that's why all the white kids there grow, but I would say that the ethics curriculum was never for POC, like whenever we would talk about race issues of course POC would have to learn about queerness and income inequality and things like that, but the majority of ethics always felt like it was some kind of spoon-fed, racism 101 BS that also like didn't even leave room for the color blindness that was going on there, the other stuff that was going on there for lack of a better word, was all sort of glossed over by ethics."- Brianna

Brianna explains how when it came to growth in relation to the school, white kids are the only ones who positively learn and benefit from their education. This is mostly seen in the discussion topics of the ethics curriculum. For her and the community of color, the ethics program was very introductory level, especially when it came to issues of race and racism. In my experiences, most kids of color (including myself) would look forward to talking through their issues of identity in class, because it is not offered to them normally. However, the subjects didn't really address the issues that they were going through. What the students of color were learning in class, had already been learned through their experience. It was so surface level that it was difficult to connect to. This process makes it difficult for students to practice democracy and citizenship because students feel that the school does not recognize their struggle as a minority against the majority white environment.

Aforementioned, Progressivism in education is a "white idea" and is very normative to white middle class peoples and their morals. In its practice, it assumed that all students are equal, despite the prevalence of race, or other physical differences. In the creation of these schools, this was easy to practice because every student did in fact, look similar and came from similar backgrounds. However, this pedagogy is now flawed. The truth is, universality in a truly diverse

environment is a false concept. Yes, everyone has the ability to relate to each other on a universal level, but this doesn't mean that they are all the same. Even in most liberal contexts, where nobody is outwardly racist, this line of thinking ignores how processes of marginalization and privilege work. As seen here, most marginalized groups voices still struggled to be heard despite some of their efforts. The main point of Progressivist education, is to prepare students to become independent thinkers, and eventually prepare them to become active citizens. However, all of these ideas are based in moral beliefs, so in practice they take on very rational forms. Its actual manifestation looks over the differences that exist in the world that make said citizenship preparations difficult.

In schools, whiteness remains the norm by denying space for black students and teacher to occupy physically and culturally while simultaneously preserving a veneer of neutrality, equality, and compassion. Often time, progressive institutions like NYPS, center their community on the bases of “equity”, “diversity” and other similarly associative words. But sometimes words such as “diversity” can be all inclusive to the point where they aren't able to recognize, and separate one identity from another. Progressive spaces like these assume all encompassing visibility that isn't always there, or at least properly address it. So as a result, it actually ends up muting these identities. Although they are at the forefront of inclusivity compared to other schools, these institutions are structurally set up to support specific kinds of students.

Conclusion

Nina's Story

Out of all 13 interviews, I found Nina's experience to be a unique one. She was the only person out of all my respondents who had a difference in outlook to her experience at New York Progressive School. She acknowledges the challenges of being a black face in a white place however, this did not discourage her from exercising agency, and being an engaged member of her community. Nina came from an entirely black background. Before NYPS it was rare if she had seen a white person, let alone be surrounded by them.

> "I lived in an all-black neighborhood, had an all-black family, you know nobody in my family even married outside of our race like- everyone I had ever been around was black. And then when I got into Oliver I was in these extracurricular activities. I was a part of the swim team but you know the swim team was black because it was at the local YMCA which was also all black. I went to an all-black dance class and it had all black and Latino students. I mean even being around Latino students was different for me because they weren't African American or Caribbean American."

Like many of the other newcomer students, Nina had never had any experience in a white environment. She even states being around Latino people was different for her because all she ever saw was black people. In a way, is Nina's first moment. For a long time, Nina only saw black people and Caribbean people. This was the first time that she saw difference around her, and around people of color. Before this moment, Nina had the singular idea that blackness was only Anglophone, or from the Caribbean. The only difference she really saw before her was black and white. There was never an idea that people could be black, from the Caribbean, but did not speak English or did not fit into the background of being African American. Here Nina becomes aware of her own diaspora. However, this moment is also a similar experience that most newcomers have. They come from predominately black and brown neighborhoods in areas

completely different from where NYPS was located. So, what was it that set Nina's experience apart from theirs?

Both Nina, and other newcomers both went to predominately black and Latino public schools before NYPS. So, they were all in a community of people that looked like they did. However, the only thing that sets them apart is that Nina came from an African *cultural* school. Her school not only had the representation in the student body and faculty, but the things she was learning about she could relate to. While in school, Nina and her classmates had history class and then a separate black history class, and they even went on a trip to Africa to learn about their history. As previously stated in "The Paradox of Diversity", students of color are often fundamentally alienated from their black history and black culture. As a result of the lack of knowledge, students of color lack self-possession and self-security. Nina's culturally specific education restored and secured a sense of self possession, that most students do not have. This was enough for her to go to school in a completely different environment and flourish. Nina previously mentions[71] that she credits her confidence and sense of self from what she learned and the community in her previous school. She states "that was really the place where I affirmed my identity and sense of self". Because of this, Nina was unafraid of the challenge of going to an all-white private school. Nina also credits the faculty there who "Really really believed in me and always told me I was gonna go so far and reminded me of my importance and my value…. so, I entered NYPS without a doubt thinking that I belonged there". At NYPS she became involved in a multitude of things. Similar to the attitudes of other students of color who sought refuge in Mr. Johnson's office in the Spaces Chapter, she joined a student club called "Diaspora" (essentially a BSU) because she felt it was the closest thing to her middle school in terms of

[71] Chapter 2 pp. 45

support. Nina later on became the head of the club for her last two years at NYPS. Nina also became a tour guide and worked in admissions as well. She surrounded herself with people and different activities that could help her adjust better.

> "I was the person who made myself accepted. It wasn't really the place but what I made of the place. I truly strived for that, like that I had a place there. I made a place there. I made myself known on campus, I got involved in tons of activities, I hung out in many spaces, I was really proactive because I didn't wanna be the black person who complained, I didn't wanna wait for the institution to accept me I just felt that it was my responsibility to be proactive and educate those around me about who I was and why I belonged there."

Nina explicitly states that it was her who made her own experience there. She didn't want to be seen as "the black person who complained", so she made it her best effort to be involved. At first when I originally heard this statement, I was a little offended. I felt that she was reducing the voices of those like myself who dedicated a lot of their time there to speak up for inclusion. However, after some time thinking about it, I realized that there are other ways to interpret that statement. Nina could have felt that if she would ask the school to accommodate her, the institution would see her as unappreciative. Alternatively, Nina could have thought that those students who speak against the institution actually did complain, and were not active enough in their own experience. Nina was an assertive person who made space for herself. Unlike most students, she had a firm idea on who she was both as a student and as a black woman, and most importantly she made sure the institution made space for her. What was most important is that Nina made no changes or adjustments to herself, she made the school bend to fit her in their community. This may not have made space for others, but it made space for her.

An important question now is, what about the students who aren't like Nina? Nina clearly stated that it was her, not her institution that made the space for her to be accepted. It's clear that her case is a rarity amongst applicants to NYPS. Nina is not only fortunate to come from a great

educational background, but also because she has a strong and determined spirit, which she credits her old school for. The culturally relevant classes, the culturally literate and supportive faculty gave her the tools she needed to succeed beyond just that school. Her experience may not be the same as everyone else, however there is something important to derive from her experience. Nina's exposure to a diverse and inclusive curriculum, along with teachers and administrators who understood her, impacted her for the rest of her educational career, even past her time at that specific school. There lies an importance in recognizing difference and embracing it with open arms as opposed to disregarding them.

Is there something that schools like NYPS can do to make more students as confident and successful as Nina? The key lies in being aware of the difference in the community and on a global scale. As seen in "The Moment "chapter, both black and white children as young as three can see it around them. Students of color continually experience what it means to live in a body of color. It's best to see difference and see inequality, and ask the important questions that come with it. This means that the curriculum has to accommodate all of those who play a part in the diaspora. In Towards African Diaspora Citizenship, Davies and M'Bow suggest that in order to incorporate more narratives in the American heritage landscape, we must work towards "developing an alternative methodology adapted to grasp the multiple meanings of 'difference' in the north American cultural landscape."[72] This proves to be relevant in discussions of inclusivity in education. There lies a fear in progressive education that if one acknowledges the disadvantaged, it could create a mentality that one student is better than another. However, this principle of seeing difference creates a way in which our society acknowledges the

[72] McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. A. (2007). Black geographies and the politics of place. Toronto, Ont: Between the Lines. pp. 92

disadvantaged, and allows everyone with equal access to opportunities. If one person has a better position than another and sees themselves as such, they are not too far ahead that someone lower than them could catch up, and more importantly they could try to help them.

If I had more time to dedicate to this project, I would explore how this institution made students of color see each other. I noticed difference in experiences depending on which race or ethnicity you were. Asian, middle eastern, and multiracial student each have a unique experience in seeing the world, which could be a separate project in itself. Additionally, I would like to go deeper into their experiences past NYPS. Many of my respondents went in different directions after graduation or after leaving. It would be interesting to analyze how they experienced themselves outside of the institution in a new setting. This would be especially interesting for the lifers, because they don't know any other education institution outside of NYPS

In a way, this senior project has been inside me for an even longer time, way before this moment in my final year. However, it is at this moment in my life as a student where I now have the correct language to unpack it. Looking back, it is in my own series of moments where I realized the importance of inclusion in the classroom. How it operates, how it exists, and how it can favor some students more than others. There needs to be a certain type of culture where all voices are not to be judged or pushed aside because they are not understood, or because they differ from the majority of the classroom. It's clear that the purpose of diversity is to simply add bodies to a space. Inclusion however, is a paradigm shift; it is a re-writing of culture. In this re-writing, it creates the space and support for all students to thrive. Not every student is as confident and assertive as Nina, however they still have a desire to be seen and recognized by institution in all ways. This means in terms of curriculum, academic support, and community value. It is the responsibility of schools like NYPS, who initially did not focus on students who

are outside of the majority; to make sure there's room for every kind of student to participate and feel comfortable in the space to be themselves.

I cannot blame my school for this and for the way I felt. Schools in America were built on the fact that they were unsafe for everyone who did not fit in with the traditional, white American narrative. However, I found it to be my job to hold NYPS (and others) accountable for this treatment. It is in my own specific bias that I have as an alumnus if this institution that gives me the ability to analyze this school for its ideologies and critique it. In sociology, it's often stressed that the observer must remain objective to their study. However, one could not write this project without subjectivity. It is impossible for me as a researcher to distance myself from an issue only I and my respondents recognize to be real. This project serves as a soundboard for those who found it difficult to speak up for what they were feeling, or didn't really know how to. I am simply amplifying the stories of those who were so brave enough to share theirs, and how it shaped them. Through their voices, I speak for all of us.

APPENDIX A:

1. Demographic

- How old are you?
- How do you identify your Gender? (Male, Female, Other)
- How do you identify racially/ethnically?
- What Social class do you identify with? (Lower Class, Working Class, Middle Class, Upper Middle Class, Upper Class, N/A)
- What are your cultural views on a scale from very liberal to very conservative? (Extremely liberal, Liberal, Slightly liberal, Moderate, Slightly conservative, Conservative, Extremely Conservative, N/A)

Specialized Questions
LIFERS (pre-k-12th grade)

- Do you know why your parents chose this school for you?
- If you came at a young age, what is your earliest memory of NYPS?
- When was the concept of race made apparent to you?

ENTERED POST ELEMENTARY

- If you can remember, can you tell me about the application process? What sort of things did you have to do?
- If you enrolled after elementary school, why did you apply to transfer to NYPS from your old school? Why was it your first choice?
- Upon coming to NYPS, what were your first impressions?
- The huge differences you noticed between your old School and NYPS?

2. School Life

2a. Pertaining to Educational/Academic Success

- At what age did you enroll in NYPS?
- What extracurricular activities were you involved in?
- Did you feel supported academically by the school?
- How academically engaged were you? (class participation, grades, etc.)
- Did you feel supported emotionally by the school/faculty?
- What was your relationship to the faculty?
- If you needed academic help (meetings with teachers, tutoring, classes), was it offered to you?

- Did you have any outside academic help (tutoring, classes etc.)

2b. Pertaining to Social Life with other Students/Peers

- What was the social climate like?
- Who were your close friends? What were their races?
- How did you feel as a woman of color/man of color/person of color in relation to your white peers?
- What was dating life like?
- Did you feel like you had a special community there for you?
- Did you feel supported/understood by your peers?

2c. Pertaining to Personal Emotional Experiences

- Do you feel that NYPS helped you understand yourself?
- Was there ever a time where you felt isolated?
- Did the school encourage any discussions or forum on identity?
- Did you feel that you had the freedom to pursue your interests there?
- Did you feel that NYPS was an inclusive environment?
- Do recall any big controversies or issues with the school in your time there? What were they about? Were they resolved? How?
- What was the most memorable about your experience there?

3. Home and Family

- How involved were your parents/guardian with the school? Explain.
- Were your parents/guardian comfortable communicating with your teachers/advisers? How did you know/tell?
- Did race/ethnicity play a barrier in how involved your parents were with the school

4. Life after NYPS

- What did you do after graduating NYPS? (Did you enroll in college, look for a job etc.)
- What are you doing currently?
- How did NYPS prepare you for college socially?
- How did NYPS prepare you for college academically?
- If you could change one thing about your experience, what would it be and why?

- Do you think that your race/ethnicity made your High School experience different? Why/Why not?

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